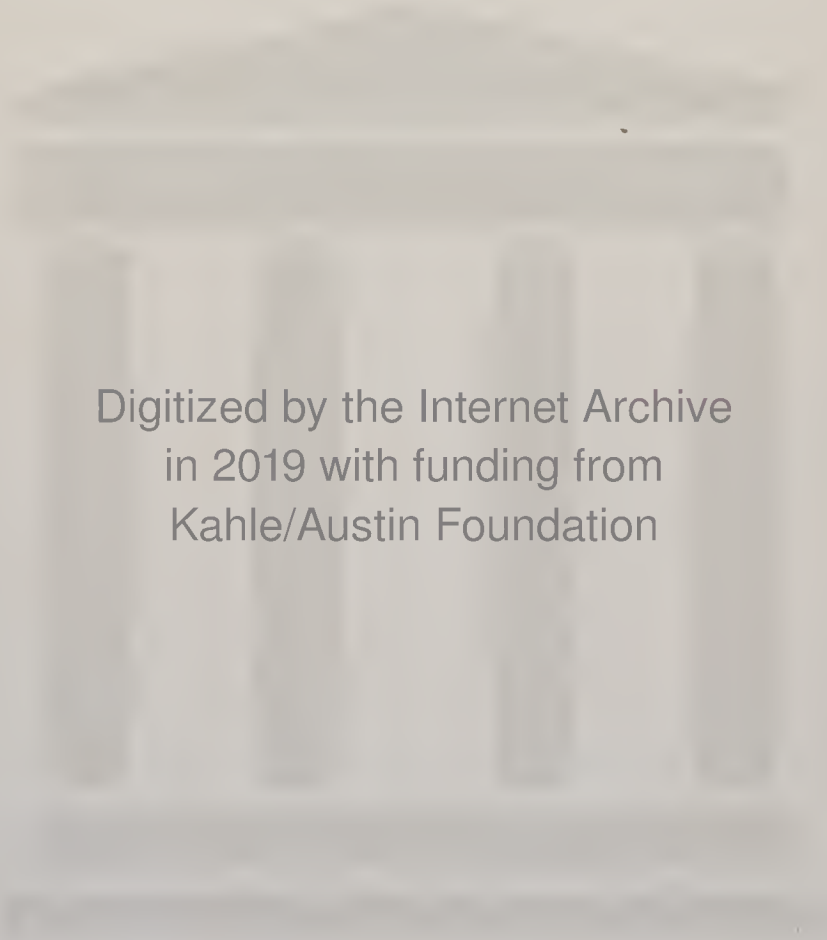
B. W. Davis.

12th June 1932.



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STARK INDIA

A MAGNIFICENT SPECIMEN OF ROCK CARVING AT GWALIOR, CENTRAL INDIA.

Frontispiece]

STARK INDIA

by

TREVOR PINCH

(Formerly Editor of "The Civil and Military Gazette," India)

With 16 Illustrations

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FOREWORD

ANY writer who sets out with the high ambition of expressing, within the compass of a book, his outstanding impressions gathered from even a short residence in India must face a task which he feels can never be properly completed. The subject is so vast; the complexities are so baffling; the country is so huge, and the problems which Britain must face —problems which daily approach a more critical stage —are so immense that any such work is beset with pitfalls. I do not claim that in this book I have achieved any particular measure of success. It has been my aim merely to set down, honestly and from rather close, inside experience, some of the more important factors of everyday life in our great Eastern Dependency. Above everything, I have tried to make this a "human-interest" book, to deal with *people* rather than with things, to show how the millions who are in our charge live, and love, and worship, and die, rather than to write of the abstract, philosophical, and possibly boring, aspects of what is generally known as the Indian question.

Although I have studied the subject for many years from the ideal vantage-ground of Fleet Street, and had the privilege of residing in India during the greater part of 1928 as Editor of the British daily newspaper, *The Civil and Military Gazette*, I am conscious that what I have written in these chapters can

be little more than fragmentary outlines in relation to the magnitude of the topic.

There are things in this book which some Indians, probably, will criticize. A candid presentation of what I consider to be vital facts may be strenuously opposed on the ground that, comparatively speaking, I was not in India very long. My reply, in that case, is that I was in India for about the same length of time as the Simon Commission, and that I made it my business to move about as much as possible and to ascertain, at first hand, the conditions of life and the views of *all* classes of people, both European and Indian, from the very highest to the lowest so-called pariahs. Hence, these pages, however they might err as a review of so vast a matter, are, at least, based on *life*.

Deliberately I have refrained, as far as practicable, from introducing purely party politics. Such questions as the shocking iniquities of "witch-doctors" and drug-fakers—rascals whom no careful observer could fail to denounce—should be completely divorced from political considerations; and so should the abominable barbarities suffered by the outcastes. The interests of humanity—not those of mere party opportunists—are at stake here.

In dealing with all the other matters contained in this book, I have contented myself with setting down, frankly, a record of the things which I either saw or heard on the spot, without drawing any definite conclusions from them. I have, however, been asked so often to convey some idea of "what is wrong with India", that it may be convenient here to furnish a list of what, merely in my personal opinion, are seven

pivotal factors of the situation, all requiring prompt redress if the Dependency is ever to achieve the glorious future so keenly desired by millions of her friends. These factors are :

(1) The over-emphasis of purely sex ideas in the great religions of the people, and particularly in Hinduism. Priestcraft governs the affairs of every-day life to an inordinate extent.

(2) The chronic ill-health of the masses and the ridiculously small expenditure on efforts to improve it. For instance, *three times as much is spent upon the pensions of a comparative handful of officials as is apportioned to the physical well-being of nearly* 320 *millions of people.* Terribly poor physique and constant illness give too many Indians a morbid and "squabbly" outlook upon life which they would not otherwise possess, thereby greatly increasing the difficulties of British administration, to say nothing of the shocking wastage of life.

(3) The swarm of sham "doctors", drug-fakers and unspeakably vile *dhais* (midwives) who, between them, "minister" to the needs of nine-tenths of the population. I was drawn into the vortex of a vigorous campaign regarding these supremely important subjects during my stay in India. Some terrible disclosures of the needless agonies endured by millions are given in Chapters VIII and IX. Each example is authentic, and they are now published for the first time in the Western world.

(4) The monstrously inhuman treatment of the 60 millions of "untouchables". India, in the eyes

of reasonable men, can *never* be regarded as a truly civilized country so long as these hideous wrongs continue. Some details of the sufferings endured are given in Chapter XIII.

(5) The extreme poverty of the masses, who are constantly in the grip of the moneylender, as described in Chapter X.

(6) The grotesquely muddled state of education, resulting, on the one hand, in unnecessary and half-fledged battalions of graduates, for whom little or no employment can be found, and, on the other hand, in a mass of total illiteracy comprising nearly 300 out of the country's 319 millions. See Chapter VII.

(7) The old-fashioned, domineering type of Indian Civil Servant who cannot adapt himself to the requirements of this ever-changing world, for even the East is changing. Too often his attitude suggests that the Indian is only a sort of savage. These *Quai Hais*, of the "out-of-my-way-you-nigger!" mentality, though they are mercifully only a small percentage, do infinite harm to British prestige in India. At the same time, the excessive Indianization of the Service has seriously deterred young Englishmen from joining it, so that the better and more adaptable class of man, who could be the salvation of the country, is not coming forward in sufficient numbers. This is particularly marked in the case of that splendid body, the Indian Medical Service, for which the recruitment of Englishmen, at the time I was in India, had virtually ceased.

FOREWORD

"Shall we lose India ?" is a constantly asked question. Unhesitatingly, I say "NO !"—if we face the facts squarely. Indians, too, must face them.

It is not for me to say what should be done. That problem is being hammered out this year at the vital round-table conference in London; but I do most earnestly call the attention of readers to the need of a complete change of heart, both in Britain and in Asia. If we lose India, the bottom drops out of the Empire, and we are faced with bankruptcy. We need not lose it, but the common conscience should insist that certain things must be put right. Religious faiths, like Brahmanism, no matter how fine the ideals may be on paper, cannot be allowed to remain superior to the interests of a mass of humanity thrust into outer darkness, and kept there, to serve a type of righteousness which is harnessed to an insatiable lust for power.

I love India too well to watch her appalling sufferings without protest; and, by "India", I mean the *real* India, not merely the land through which the tourist tears in a space of five days in a comfortable train. I mean the country of the masses, not the picture-postcard show-places; the villagers and small-town people forming ninety per cent. of the whole, not the purely artificial cities with their flaring night-signs and blaring "talkies". In *that* India, there are many things, shocking and almost unmentionable, to the Western mind, which need to be redressed. In these chapters, I have tried to set some of them down.

Indians themselves must take a leading part in working for the reforms of this *real* India. They must cease their tricky manœuvring for nothing more than

party advantages, and absolutely put aside self-seeking. I know, from conversations with the highest authorities on the spot, that the Britons already in the country are deeply sympathetic and only too ready to further any reforms that will help the *masses*, not just the Hindus or the Moslems.

The eyes of the world are upon Indians and upon us. During recent months, Americans have become extraordinarily interested in our Eastern problems. Their newspapers and magazines are as alive to the position as are our own publications. Sir John Simon, leader of the famous Commission, a part of whose work I was privileged to observe at close quarters, says: "The American is very anxious to learn what the facts are."

India, with whose progress the welfare of everyone in Britain is inextricably bound up, has reached a turning-point. But, before she moves swiftly to the proud place for which her ancient—though now sadly misapplied—culture fits her, there are many terrible evils which must go. I have related some, but not all, of them, for no writer could do that. They must be expunged, not by Commissions or by conquerors, and not by the passage of long-drawn-out agonized years. They must go *now*. Indians and Britons, working together in the common cause of humanity, as distinct from petty politics, must stamp them out utterly and for ever.

TREVOR PINCH.

1930.

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STARK INDIA

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CHAPTER I

THE LAND OF SEX-MAD MILLIONS

ALONG the scorched road, where choking heat wells up from the dust, a road where the breath of humanity itself seems to shiver in the blazing rays of an Indian June, comes an excited throng of men and women.

The air is a furnace of sunlight. The sacred fig trees, or *peepuls*, that line the pathway cannot provide shade for such a crowd as this. Bare feet, or feet shod in village-made wooden shoes, or even in the newest offerings from the lasts of Hindustan, send the all-pervading dust flying.

The strange, subtle, half-acrid and never-forgotten smell of baked earth penetrates the nostrils. The eyes are seared by the glare from a merciless sky.

There are Hindus in their *dhotis* (loin-cloths) and little else. There are Hindu women and girls wearing their embroidered *saris* (shawl-like mantles) with the queenly grace befitting these glorious garments of endlessly varied hues.

Old men and youths; mature matrons and blithe little girls; middle-aged merchants and lean, spectacled students; unkempt mendicants and semi-Westernized

scions; hard-headed moneyed men and philosophic penurious dreamers—all these are in the assembly. All share the gruelling torment of a road that is Nature's nearest approach to an oven.

But they do not mind. They chatter nearly as loudly and whirl to and fro almost as giddily as the brain-fever birds which shout from overhead their never-ceasing, always-rising screech of *brain feever! brain fee-e-ver! brain fee-e-e-ver! brain fee-e-e-e-ver!*

It is good-natured, this gathering of Indians, though not so jolly as the people you see during a Hampstead Heath or an Epsom Downs junketing. Its purpose is different.

These wayfarers are not holiday-makers, but temple-goers. Their road leads to an important place of worship. It is the adoration of *Siva* that calls them, drawing them from their homes more compellingly, more regularly, and certainly more dutifully than the urge of the Christian Church in many an English town.

This is not a holy day, not a "Sabbath", in any sense of the word. It is just an ordinary occasion; yet, here is this concourse of merely average people streaming to their temple.

No cars filled with joy-riders flash by them as they do on an English highway. No motor-cycles, with pillion girls, picnic-bound, roar along this road. There are no parties of trippers feverishly hunting down a day's pleasure—those thousandfold trippers who, as they speed through the arteries of England on a hot summer day, scarcely have time to glance at tiny—not to say singular—groups trickling through a lych-gate to worship a God of Love.

How few are the roadside churches in Britain where the clamour of the gay throng outside does not come to the ear more clearly than the vespers of the few dozens inside!

Yet here I stand in the heart of India, backward, troublesome, seething India, and the tables are completely turned. The only roadside hubbub is that of the people on their way to worship, and it seems to me that nearly the whole town is going to the temple. They have motor-cars, plenty of them, in this big city; but where are they now? They have a fondness for pleasure; they have the common human love of idling; but they have turned their thoughts to other things for the moment. There is an alluring river near this spot, where the water invites one to cool one's burning body; but the bathing must wait. Meanwhile, they press eagerly along that grilling road.

What is the magnet that draws almost an entire populace to the big, blatant-looking temple adorned with clusters of skilfully-wrought though weird sculptures?

It is the lure of *Siva*, the popular god of the Hindu pantheon—*Siva* the Destroyer but also the Giver of life, *Siva* the fountainhead of procreation. They worship him, and are constantly drawn to him, because he is, above all others, the representative of a man's sex-life. To his honour, in all his innumerable temples throughout India, is graven the frank phallic emblem called by Hindus the *linga*.

This is no god of Love that these people worship. Rather, they are going to prostrate themselves before a crude symbol typifying masculinity. They are to

bow before the productiveness of *Siva*, the mighty one, whose token, so immodest to Western eyes, and yet so natural and not in the least improper in the eyes of the Indian, is found in countless homes, is worn around the necks of multitudes, is revered as a charm against sterility, and is proudly painted on the foreheads of thousands.

Even the last-named practice is not necessarily regarded as disturbing because, to these people, sex, particularly the male, is the most important thing in life. It is a belief ingrained by their religion, through centuries of ancestors, until it has become an obsession.

Siva may be, to the Hindu, a Destroyer. He may be, and is, worshipped as the Terrible One whose fury, so the tradition relates, shook the earth when he whirled the remains of one of his consorts, the immolated *Soma*, or *Sati*, around him, flinging one of her limbs here, and another there, so that, wherever they fell, the ground became sanctified with an awful sanctity, and shrines sprang up—shrines to Rage and Sex-Energy.

As I shall show later, it is the last-named element which, since the twilight of history, has taken a predominant place in the religion, and, therefore, in the life (for the two are one in the East), of vast numbers of Indians. The obsession has grown until the great sub-continent has become the land of sex-mad millions.

Thus there arises the strange contrast that while England negligently and light-heartedly passes by the altars of the God of Divine Forgiveness and Love, India's teeming masses pour dutifully and solemnly before the shrines associated primarily with violence and sex.

Here, it must be admitted that a sensual obsession is to be found among some sections of society in almost every country. One will encounter it on the boulevards of Paris. It will be rather more marked in the dockland of Marseilles. Its crescendo will grow considerably at Port Said where the Egyptians who prowl like pariahs on the verge of the stinking Arab-town will whisper their horrid formula, "smutee post-cards, sar! smutee postcards!" into the ear of nearly every white man and thrust their packets of obscenity under one's nose. Bombay reeks of similar, though more cleverly hidden, iniquities, but it is in the great India beyond—the India of the myriads, the country where the vast majority live in very small towns and villages—that sex-notions, in the daily lives of great sects and even of entire races, form a principal aim of existence, an end to be pursued for its own sake.

That is the fact which not only makes India, containing a fifth of the world's inhabitants, unique among big countries, but also adds an enormous complication to Britain's most pressing and intricate problem.

For this obsession must be thoroughly understood before the Herculean task of solution can be accomplished, even partially. It is this deep-rooted sex-worship—it might truly be called a mania—which makes devotees gladly torture themselves; causes the most shocking suffering to innocent victims, such as child-wives; induces terrible crimes; breeds communal strife and hatred; plunges whole millions into life-long debt; confers an ill-gotten prosperity upon priestly castes and blood-sucking usurers; and, perhaps worst of all, undermines the vitality of a people who,

if they were really guided by their old and splendid culture, could rise to greatness.

Sex is the fatal barrier, the primal curse. For its sake India is held, as it were, in an uneasy slumber, shaken at intervals by evil dreams and gusts of passion. While she might be up and doing, thriving, healthy, cheerful, she is down and dozing, only half-efficient, sick and morose. What else can she expect so long as the high ideals of the mind, which she has in plenty, are subordinated, in the case of millions, to the low conditions of the body ?

Many books have been written on India, but, with one or two notable exceptions, they have paid more attention to political than to physical questions. That the mind governs the body is an axiom of Oriental philosophy and one which, as I am able to testify, the more advanced Hindu can put into practical operation with startling results. But, among the Indian masses, it is only too noticeable that the body governs the mind. This is a striking paradox in a land where Hinduism, essentially a mental creed, has a greater following than any other faith.

Many men occupying high places have told me that, if Britain does not recognize this fact and shape her course of action in such a way as to face frankly this dangerously dominant sex-psychology, without interfering with the proper freedom of what is, basically, one of the greatest religions in the world, she will assuredly lose her most important Dependency.

That may sound extreme, but it is the considered view of men who have lived and toiled and moved about in the country.

THE LAND OF SEX-MAD MILLIONS

Nearly eighteen months ago, I wrote, in an article published by *The Yorkshire Post*, dealing with the Simon Commission :

> "If Sir John and his colleagues can give Parliament such information as will result, even though it might take years, in the complete severance of religion from politics in India, they will be the real saviours of the country."

To this, I would now add that, if sex—in its cruder aspect, at any rate—could be divorced from the great religions of India, the problem would be still easier of solution. A healthier people would be the result. A more rational, brighter view of life would replace the Indians' present morbid, introspective, and almost sickly outlook. There would be a proud, vigorous, and happy partnership with Britain. In the circumstances of to-day, the early realization of such an ideal is wellnigh impossible.

Imagine the obstacles which would be encountered in administering Great Britain if an all-powerful section of society, similar to the Brahmans of the East, were to base nine-tenths of our religious observances and Biblical beliefs on the physical aspects of sex. Consider what the state of the country would be if that section had such a stranglehold on the remainder (as the Brahmans have) that they were able to enforce the edict. Under these conditions, how could any reforms, sorely needed for the good of the masses, become operative or help anybody except, perhaps, in so far as they tend to strengthen the stranglers' grip on the comatose community below them ?

It has long been apparent to all impartial men with a knowledge of India that the rigid adherence to sex-customs and to the thousands of caste-regulations springing from them is a matter of the utmost importance to the Brahmans, the would-be despots of India. This policy alone is an insurance in favour of their vested interests which are so vast as to be out of all proportion to their numbers. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that already no fewer than one hundred and sixty millions of caste Hindus are under the complete control of about ten million Brahmans. No pains are spared on the part of these "upper ten" millions to maintain their ascendancy, and one highly-efficient way of achieving this is to ensure that Hinduism, in the mass, is conducted along those channels which shall provide plenty of rupees for the Brahman's pocket and plenty of kudos for his pride. Those objects, as will be seen, are admirably served by the careful conservation of what I have described as the sex-obsession of the more lowly people.

It thus comes about that, to the Indian in the mass, sex is rather more important than money, and almost as vital as food. It governs his work, his leisure, his talk, his place and policy in the domestic circle. Day in, day out, from hot weather to cool, from the drought to the rains and back to the drought again, from moon to moon, from the rising to the setting of the sun—and long after, through the alluring nights—sex is co-paramount and co-ordinate with his religion.

Sex burns him as a fire and withers him as a leaf. Apart from it and from his forms of worship (and the

one is often closely associated with the other) there is little for him in life. "Propagate! propagate!" is the eternal cry. If, at the same time, this can be linked with real love, so much the better. But at all costs and in all circumstances, whether in seasons of comparative plenty or in adverse times, it is his bounden duty to become the father of sons. Are the wedded ones Mahommedans? Then Allah will feed the mouth to come. Are they Hindus? Then the gods will provide.

It is a simple cult, no less than an age-old urge. It is natural, and it is so easy for critics to condemn it, even though mankind everywhere knows it and understands it. But, in the West, man, convention, and harsh economics—not to mention the modern tendency to weigh a baby car in the balance against a baby's cradle—have brought about a degree of control.

The Indian, generally speaking, does not practise any considerable control. Economics, graphs dealing with the cost of living and considerations affecting the gold standard do not interest him. He lives, loves and propagates. Thus, he and his kind have become a fifth of the world's peoples.

The Indian politician who visits England for the first time probably does not take long to discover that the British, as so long desired by soap-box sophists, have become—at least, partially—class-conscious. The Englishman making his first journey East quickly realizes that the Indian, in a collective sense, is sex-conscious. One Indian in ten thousand may be aware of a "class" superiority varying in proportion to his ability to read the bazaar newspapers, but his sex-awareness is a hundred per cent. possession.

To the Western mind, Indians of nearly all kinds and creeds give the impression of being over-sexed. Not, perhaps, in the prurient, half-shamed way of some white youths and girls who turn these matters into subjects for ribald jokes of the *double entendre* type, or *risque* dormitory chatter, but, rather, in an objective, unconcealed, and matter-of-course fashion.

From his earliest years, the Hindu—and, to a lesser extent, the Mahommedan—is expected to realize that a duty above all others is to become a father, or a mother, as the case may be, without the loss of any precious time in a country where the grip on life is none too certain. So sex assumes a purposeful, almost grim, aspect.

Boys and girls are brought up with the one fixed idea that, whatever might befall, the gods, or Allah, will expect them to use the urge within them and to have children, more especially men-children. There is nothing of the flippant, semi-humorous, smoke-room element about this. It is earnest, real, and, despite all Western criticisms, it does at least possess the merit of being patently honest.

It is all so different from the self-conscious flirtations with sheer indecency which marks so much of Western youth, or the smirking and sly prurience of middle-aged rakes and still older *roués*. The West exploits sex with a more or less (chiefly less, nowadays) concealed and apologetic air. The East parades it, by comparison, openly and unashamed. The reader must decide for himself which is the more desirable or sensible basis for the establishment of sex-consciousness.

Then, consider the question of numbers. India

contains eight times as many inhabitants as the British Isles. Imagine the people of Britain suddenly multiplied eight-fold. Try to picture its teeming millions doubled, trebled, and quadrupled—what a throng you would have up to that point !—and then visualize these hordes doubled again. Their immensity is almost beyond the grasp of the human mind. The brain cannot readily cope, in true perspective, with such a total as three hundred and twenty millions.

Then seek to realize that, in that mighty mass, every living soul, from the age of six or seven upwards, is imbued with the one compelling idea, one stupendous driving-force, the conception of sex, as something in which to glory—sex, with well-defined obligations ; sex, with religious duties ; sex, a god, or many gods in itself ; sex, in a word, paramount !

Think of sex, especially the male, being regarded in every class-room, dormitory, office or workshop as the primary and over-ruling factor in life. Think of it as the subject of open veneration. Think of the little tongues that are deliberately taught to lisp and prattle about it, for it is a matter for the earliest and considered instruction of dawning intelligence. Sex becomes almost a Bible, a prayer-book, and a catechism.

It is no exaggeration to say that there are in India girls of ten, nine, and even eight, who know more about sex-relationships than the average married woman of thirty in England. But their knowledge and experience —complete, and, to Western eyes, revolting as these things may be—cannot, in fairness to them, be classed as the outcome of licentiousness or abnormality.

Rather, it is the normal and humdrum routine of

life. From the very dawn of their intelligent existence, submission in sex-matters is strictly enjoined upon them by the tenets of their creeds. The priests, the laws, and the Brahmans have to be obeyed. Is it not laid down in the code of *Manu*, and in a thousand sacred writings, that they have certain crystal-clear duties to perform ? In the carrying out of these duties, let it be at once admitted there is nothing of shame and, in many cases—with the exception of certain Hindu rites —there is but little lust.

No ! life and religion, and the people who are set in authority over these slips of girls (for millions of them are scarcely more than that), have ordained that their feet shall be set in those paths, and—behold !—it is so ! This is the way of their life, their rational mode of existence. They know of no other.

Sex rules them. They are caught up in its omnipotence. The *Rigveda* and the *mantras*—the sacred book and the prayers—the course of conduct stipulated by the priests, and the dominant pressure of the highest castes of Hindu society—the twice-born—control them and sweep them, helpless, passive, and sometimes even joyous, into the net from which there is not, and never can be, any escape.

An English friend and myself had occasion to go on business, one scorching afternoon, into the maze of bazaars in a great Indian city. Leaving our car at a point where it was impossible to drive it farther owing to the extreme narrowness of the streets, we turned down a reeking alleyway littered with garbage, offal, and prone dozing bodies.

Our search for the man we sought led us all the way

down that fetid passage. There, at the end, in a tiny space forming a miniature cul-de-sac, sprawled a dozen sketchily clad, or unclad, coolies, outcaste pariahs who are regarded by men of their own colour as being beyond the pale.

They appeared to be intensely interested in something, judging by their excited chattering in the high-pitched tone of the East. Drawing nearer, I saw that they were passing from hand to hand a grimy and tattered copy of a famous illustrated periodical printed in London.

It riveted their attention more than many of their painted gods or chanted prayers could have done. That select Society journal, possibly brought over from England by some elegant passenger in a luxurious liner, was snatched eagerly first by one and then by another. It was hugged to scraggy chests. The coolies gloated and mouthed over it. They peeped and peered at it with avid eyes.

Each man seemed to have a tacitly-understood time-allowance in which to revel in this product of West-End elegance. Ten seconds over the allowance, and a skinny hand relentlessly shot forth, transferring the temporary ownership to the next man on the waiting list who, in his turn, gloated and babbled and fidgeted and licked his dry sensuous lips during a study of the printed pages.

Feeling that as a newspaper man I ought to find out why "high-class" English journalism made so powerful an appeal in such unpromising surroundings, I went up to the group and ventured to look over their shoulders, while my companion, a twice-born Hindu,

remained at the proper stipulated distance from the unapproachable untouchables.

Then I discovered the secret. In the centre of that periodical were several pages devoted to beautifully reproduced photographs of English sun-bathing women and girls at a famous French resort.

Some of the girls and women wore only a very little less than those pariahs themselves. Proud holders of names you will find in many pages of Burke, Debrett, or Kelly's Handbooks, they disported themselves in a variety of attitudes across the glowing pages.

It was these postures, once described to me by a renowned London art-editor in one eloquent word, "leggy", which fascinated and held the outcastes. The chief focal point of attention was a double-page "spread" of pictures artistically dominated by Lady ——. The photographer and art-editor had certainly made the finest use of her excellent figure, and they would have been highly interested in what the pariahs thought, and openly said, about their enterprise.

Nothing else in that high-class product mattered a solitary pice, the smallest Indian coin. It was the "leggy" feature alone that counted.

There they squatted in that reeking alleyway—these human dregs, covered only with sweat and dust and filthy loin-rags, staring ecstatically at the lovely whiteness of milady—prying at the exquisite moulding of the Marchioness ——, peeking at the sylph-like slenderness of the Honourable ——.

So this, they were saying, was what the *Miss-sahibs* and the *Mem-sahibs* did in the countries across the water! This was how they undressed and displayed

themselves! How different from the habits of India! And they were also saying, frankly and seriously: "What mothers these would be! Mothers to bear sons for the service and the glory of the gods!"

The average Englishman would have seen in those pictures nothing but beauty and radiant health among clean, sun-blessed surroundings. The Indian sees in them nothing but crude organic sex—sex as it appeals to him amid the foulness of his backyard where the merciless sun blazes down on corruption, where the very air seems to be a shimmering putrescence.

For, to him, there is very little, if anything, in life except sex, and it is equally certain that, so far as he is concerned, there is nothing in sex except life. It is venerated as something in itself, worshipped for its own sake, openly and unashamed.

Nor does this obsession confine itself to boys, youths, and men. It is equally pronounced in girls, even in those of comparatively tender years. From this, it should not be presumed that the Indian maiden, as soon as she reaches adolescence, necessarily becomes voluptuous or seductive. Assuredly, she does not.

Curious as it may seem, in the light of child-marriages and the most open recognition of sex-practices which would shock the Western mind, she can yet display, on occasion, a marked sense of modesty. If the reader regards this as anomalous, I can only reply that it is yet another example of the fact that India, like China, is a land of dramatic topsy-turvydom.

Every student of human nature realizes that absolute nakedness, whether of mind or body, can never be so disturbing as half-hidden allurement. English Bishops

and Deans, in their campaigns against modern undress in Britain, have constantly pointed this out, and the nude cults of Europe have even seized upon that very axiom as a defence of their practices.

Knowing everything of sex, and taught to regard man as a being whose prime and praiseworthy function is that of fatherhood, the Indian maiden, whatever her beauty of body and soul (and both are often undeniable), is apt to reduce relations which might otherwise be loving and romantic to a plane that is merely dutiful and physical. Even so, she often shows that she is not without a charming feminine shyness.

Here is a story, illustrative of that striking blend of modesty and what thoughtless people describe as "abandon". It was told me a few years ago in a town on the sweltering Punjab plain, and I know it to be true :

One night, at the end of the hot weather, while a thrice-blessed rain was falling outside, a dance was held in a spacious club-house. Local leaders of Indian, Anglo-Indian, and European society were there. Hindus with rich *pagris* (turbans), Brahmans with the *janeo* (sacred thread) hanging from the left shoulder, Mahommedans with their head-dress bound around a glittering *kullah* (centre-piece) of gold, women with their gorgeous, enveloping *saris* of radiant silk thrown so negligently, yet so artistically, over shoulder and hips, pompous *babus* (clerks) with their grotesquely tight embroidered caps, Europeans in immaculate mess-kit—all these were present, for the function was a very mixed affair.

A good band of about thirty instrumentalists,

THE GATEWAY TO THE REAL INDIA. A CARAVAN FROM CENTRAL ASIA TRAVELLING DOWN THE FORBIDDING KHYBER PASS INTO PESHAWAR.

recruited from the District Police, played popular airs. Electric fans droned overhead. From the open veranda, which ran along one side of the dance-floor, swam myriads of winged things, clouds of flying ants and other tormentors driven by the rain and attracted by the lights.

Cushioned chairs, occasional tables and discreetly curtained alcoves invited rest and languorous flirtations between dances. Beyond the veranda, in the long avenue of lovely trees leading to the club-house, stood double lines of sleek saloon cars which would have been a credit even to Piccadilly on an important first night, or to The Mall during a Court.

Among the guests was an exceptionally pretty girl —a Eurasian, or, as this type now prefers to be called, an Anglo-Indian. She was the daughter of a hard-working and prosperous man—himself an Anglo-Indian—holding an important post in the service of a European company. Her mother, most of whose mental and physical qualities were obviously inherited by the daughter, was a Hindu woman of great beauty. Both parents were present.

One of my friends, a high official of the European company, went up to the girl during an interval and, bowing respectfully, said in the clipped way so often adopted when addressing people whose knowledge of English is rather imperfect:

"The next dance, Miss ——? May I have the pleasure?"

To his surprise, the daughter coyly lowered her eyes and remained silent for a moment, as if debating a matter of great consequence. Then she replied, with

the peculiar rising cadence and sing-song intonation of the Eastern girl :

"The next dance, Sahib, yes—I will certainly give it to you. But, for giving you what you call the pleasure, you must first ask my mother !"

If that strange reply, suggesting a sex obsession so strong as to read an unintended meaning into a perfectly innocent question, typifies the natural and, therefore, not necessarily nasty, attitude of a girl of mixed descent, what may one expect of the sons and daughters of pure Hinduism ?

It is hoped that the reader will not misunderstand this. Nothing could be farther from the truth than to imagine that India is necessarily a land of lascivious *houris*, flashing-eyed "vamps" and ardent temptresses.

Although steeped, almost from the cradle, in physiological ideas and knowledge that would slow up the dictaphone of even the most "modern" Western author if he tried to weave a novel around them, the average girl or woman of India does not possess, or try to cultivate, those magnetic and amorous qualities with which she is so wrongly credited. About her, there is nothing of that London or Parisian appeal which, when incorporated into stage bedroom scenes or revue spectacles, induces West End theatre managers to sell pit seats at the price of stalls.

European moralists, from Archbishops downwards, may produce speeches and treatises on "sex-appeal". The Bright Young People of the Mayfair drawing-rooms may contract the expression, as they do, to "S.A." thereby dethroning the recognized rights of the Salvation Army. Hollywood may epitomize it into the monosyllabic

"It". The "talkies" may trick it out with the lingerie of the boudoir and the language of the Bowery. But, to the Indian girl, all this is meaningless. Sex, in her eyes, is merely sex—that, and nothing more. It is plain, preponderant, real, dutiful, and dynamic.

One might imagine that such a viewpoint would inevitably tend to debase the feminine element among India's swarming millions. But, here again, the country shows that it is truly a land of opposites. No impartial observer (and I hope that I am one) could say that the status of India's women is becoming lowered, or that there is a lack of respect towards them. It is true that there are some disgraceful exceptions, with which I shall deal elsewhere; but, generally speaking, mothers and daughters are held in the utmost esteem, while they, in their turn, usually display a tender and self-effacing, yet dignified, devotion which is altogether charming. Almost invariably, their conduct, both in their homes and outside, is beyond reproach. I still have to meet the man who can truthfully say that an Indian woman was deliberately ill-mannered towards him or anybody else.

I have seen thousands of Indian women, but I have never noticed one in a real temper, except once, and that was when a fussy half-caste railway official (than whom there is no more excitable person alive) roughly pushed her little boy aside on a crowded station platform. Then the mother-love and the age-old protective instinct arose. For forty seconds she was verbally a tigress, and the mandarin of the Great Indian Peninsula was a minor and mauled mammal. As for me, I was delighted.

It was a refreshing tonic on a particularly hot and dusty journey.

In recent years, some writers have created a vogue for descriptions of Indian women, in general, as the most downtrodden of beings. They have drawn pictures which would indicate that the lives of *all* wives of the lower classes are *always* so wretched as to be comparable only with those of scavenger dogs. These artists in words, mostly women themselves, are not wholly justified by the facts. It is true that Indian mothers and daughters have a terrible existence, judged by Western standards. But the writers have, in the main, omitted to emphasize two highly important factors. The first is that the average Indian woman's idea of her truest and highest purpose in life is that of *service* to her husband. The second is that despite everything which seems, to the European, to be repressive, Indians insist that, outwardly, at any rate, their womenfolk are entitled to the most sincere respect, and most of them see that their wives get it. It is quite true that there are vast numbers of ghastly exceptions, with which I shall deal later.

Nevertheless, on the pavements of London's Whitechapel Road, during any Saturday night, you will see more open disrespect towards women, hear more lewd remarks about them, observe more of the evil glint of desire in the eyes of young rakes and old *roués*, catch more prurient glances between men and girls, witness the making of more improper liaisons, and besmirch your mind with more ribald obscenity and half-veiled indecency, than you would encounter at any bazaar-corner of an Indian city in six months.

A Hindu or Mahommedan girl, east of Suez, can pass through a street of any class at any hour and never overhear a doubtful remark, or be the object of a single licentious leer, from a man or youth. Wherever she goes, she is treated with a quiet respect.

But there is this important difference between the Oriental and the Occidental attitude. It is not so much the woman herself, but, rather, *the sex typified by her* which is the real object of a regard wellnigh indistinguishable from veneration.

That is why, despite the recital of facts which, at first glance, might appear contradictory, I have written, in this chapter, of "sex-mad millions". The expression "mad" is not used here in a sense which could be described as the strict European meaning of the word. An open and unabashed obsession with sex, so widespread, so scheduled, so commonly accepted, and so highly organized as to be almost "rationalized," must certainly *seem* to be mad to every Eastern onlooker. But is it madness in the view of Indians themselves ?

If nine-tenths of the people think much the same thoughts about sex and privately observe almost the same practices—practices, mark you, which, however unbridled and shocking, are yet free from many of the repressions, perversions and subterfuges of the West —then it might well be that those nine-tenths alone regard themselves as sane, deeming the remaining and critical tenth to be mad.

It should never be forgotten that sex, in its organic qualities rather than in its romanticism or beauty, is a predominating factor of Hinduism. The Simon Report tells us that, in British India alone, there are no fewer

than 163 millions of Hindus,[1] or about four times the entire population of the United Kingdom. Every one of those Hindus is pledged, in a greater or lesser degree, but always to a definite extent, to a sex-life which demands, and receives, his or her constant attention from the age of puberty.

Procreation is, inevitably, a natural law in every country, but, to the Hindu, it is the clamant command of the gods, of man and woman, of life itself, and even of the very universe. The man is the giver of life, and, as such, is the superior being. The woman—respected, desirable and useful—is the medium at the disposal of man, just that and very little more.

Imagine Britain packed with an immense mass of people, crowded so much that there would be four men, women and children for every person now in this country. Then imagine that throng to be imbued with one overwhelming impulse, one governing ideal, rooted in sex—an iron conviction that, come what may, more and more men-children must be born, such being the will of the gods, that man must create and re-create and multiply, so that the endless cycles of incarnations may go on until all are finally absorbed into *Brahma*, the Perfect, Absolute, All-Embracing, Universal Spirit. What would our England be like ? Yet, I have done no more than to summarize into a sentence the cardinal principle of Hinduism shorn of its myriad trappings and intricacies.

Who would be genius enough to devise a method of rule for the homeland if sex, in a strictly reproductive sense, and founded on religion, were generally regarded

[1] Simon Report, vol. 1, page 25.

as being more important than politics, economics, public welfare, and health? What is normal in India —normal because it is universally accepted—would be regarded as the height of abnormality in England. Indeed, it would be viewed as a grotesque form of mania, and it is only in that relative sense that I have applied the term "sex-mad" to millions of Indians.

No one can gain an appreciation of the formidable importance of sex in the everyday life of India until he realizes how greatly the phallic element enters into the faith of the masses.

There exists among vast sections of Hindus a definite adoration of the male generative function, an adoration such as was practised by the ancient Greeks and Phoenicians, whose glories and Empires later crumbled.

They join extravagantly in esoteric rituals which, judged by an ordinary standard, go far beyond average restraint, even after making every allowance for those devotees who look to the lessons taught by the acts rather than to the acts themselves.

Consider, for example, the widespread worship of the Brahmans' favourite god, *Siva* (or *Hara*). This is frankly sexual inasmuch as it is founded upon the veneration paid to a crude pillar of marble or stone which openly represents the human phallus, or *linga*, as the Hindus call it. Worship among many sects is also accorded to the female sex-element, known as *yoni*. The roughly-hewn, hideously inartistic *linga* symbol is, however, encountered almost everywhere.

Throughout that mighty sub-continent, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin and from Karachi to Chittagong, are strewn countless Siva temples. Defend

them as they may, idealize their meaning as they will, Hindus cannot deny that, on the surface at any rate, these are shrines dedicated to the power of procreation. They exist solely for an adoration which, in its essence, is sensual.

In each of them is the *linga*, resting on a circular stone. Before this stark altar the faithful gather, as their forefathers gathered two thousand or more years ago.

This gross influence does not begin and end at the shrine. It permeates life in a multitude of directions. Go into a Hindu home. It is probable that a miniature *linga* will be there as one of the household gods. Indeed, that bit of stone is still commonly used as a charm whose magic powers are popularly supposed to ward off sterility.

Then there are those who carry this unedifying obsession still farther. In Southern India, one may encounter *Lingayats*, who are members of the *Siva* sect. Day and night, these people carry about with them the phallic sign of *Siva*. Slung from the neck, at the end of a cord or chain, is a little case containing this sexual emblem moulded in metal. That is their dearest possession, their ever-present object of worship. Followers of this ancient "culture" are by no means inconsiderable. They probably number between a million-and-a-half and two millions of people. It is as though the combined populations of, say, Birmingham and Liverpool were addicted to this somewhat embarrassing practice. To put it mildly, should we not, in such circumstances, speak of those cities as the abodes of sex-mad millions ?

Whether it is the image of *Siva*, startling in its

pure whiteness, or the figure of *Vishnu*, vivid in dark blue, which is venerated, sex, and matters relating to it, still remain pivots of the ritual accorded to the worship of *Hari* and *Hara*, as *Vishnu* and *Siva* are more generally known.

Vishnu is not only represented with his wives, but with his mistresses as well. A favourite incarnation of this leader among the Hindu pantheon is the young and super-amorous *Krishna*, hero of the famous *Prem-sagar* ("ocean of love"). The legends of his voluptuously gay adventures among the wives (*gopis*) of avaricious cowherds, as narrated in highly-revered Indian writings, depict an ardour equalled only by inconstancy, and would not pass many censors even in this age of frankness.

Consider, again, the question of *linga*-worship. The shrines built for this purpose—extraordinary in Western eyes, but perfectly normal to the Hindu—are usually somewhat unpretentious affairs with some dozen imposing exceptions, such as that at Benares—a noted *Siva* centre.

I know of important undertakings in India which have in their compounds *linga*-shrines cheek by jowl with the wheels of twentieth-century industry. They are often mean and shabby little structures, consisting only of a small enclosed space in a sort of recess, a holy of holies which contains the unrefined symbol.

It is a comparatively common thing to see Hindus, possibly working upon the most modern type of complicated electrical machinery, leave their toil and troop in a body to offer fruit or other tokens of esteem to a priest in charge of the prosaic and none too pleasant emblem which decorates the inner shrine.

This done, after making several circuits of their strange altar, the worshipper will fall flat upon his face. In that position, he will grovel before a crude physiological token. He will then utter a *mantra*, or prayer, and return to his labours among the advanced products of scientific and engineering skill!

That this male sex symbol is held in the highest regard and is even classed with the highest of the five elements upon which Hinduism is based—namely, earth, water, fire, air and ether, in that order—is obvious to any student of the religion.

According to the Pandit Natesa in "Hindu Feasts, Fasts and Ceremonies," the Supreme Self, the Absolute Perfection, the All-Embracing Spirit, even the Godhead itself (*Paramatman*) is represented in the renowned shrine of Chidambaram, in Arcot, as being the ether-*linga*, or the *Akasa*. It is true that, in an effort to present the idea in the most æsthetic and subtle form, the space which, according to the priests, contains this spirit is kept completely empty. The symbol, for once, is missing, but even so the word *linga* and, therefore, the primary idea of sex conveyed by it is not only deliberately and carefully preserved, but is also applied to a conception of the All-Embracing Spirit.

Could there be any more eloquent example of the appalling extent to which the minds of India's millions have become dominated by what other mortals must surely deem to be sex-madness?

Lofty and, in some respects, idealistic as many of the more abstruse religious philosophies of India may be, the pre-eminent place in most creeds, as I have sought to show, is accorded to the duty of procreation,

This, allied with the resultant gratification of the senses, has led, and still leads, to the most corrupt and shameful abuses among some sections of the community.

While the blame for such a result may not be laid at the door of Hinduism *qua* Hinduism, and while it would be disclaimed by some of the very cultured leaders of the religion, it is difficult to see what else could be expected when such an exaggerated and unhealthy emphasis is placed upon purely physical sex functions in a country where at least nine people out of every ten are ignorant to the point of illiteracy.

Things have improved very little, if at all, since the days when Dr. W. W. Hunter, dealing with Orissa, wrote :

> "The most deplorable corruption of Vishnu worship . . . is that which has covered the temple walls with indecent sculptures and filled its innermost sanctuaries with licentious rites."

Hindus have hotly disputed this statement and, while admitting the existence of the sculptures, claim that the adherents of *Vishnu*-worship, as it is understood to-day, cannot be held responsible for them. They have also adopted the highly controversial—not to say convenient—argument, that there is no licentiousness, even in the "ocean of love".

While the priests and the *Pandits* may be left to skate as gracefully as they can over that exceedingly thin ice, it would require a mental agility superior even to that of an Indian philosopher to deny the extraordinary sex-obsession which runs like an ever-recurring pattern through the creeds of the important *Vallabha*

(the "cow-lords") and *Vaishnava* sects, the former in Western and Central India, the latter in Bengal.

The *Vallabha* followers are worshippers of *Krishna* in his more dissolute guise. Some of the strict adherents of this sect, as soon as they are old enough to prattle, are taught to say: "Holy *Krishna* is my refuge." It naturally follows that they grow up with the fixed idea that this god, so unorthodox in his views towards the grosser appetites of life, represents an ideal well worth pursuing.

The æstheticism, the restraint, the self-denial, the stern discipline, the mortification of the flesh, the long exile, and the silent contemplations which one cannot help admiring in many branches of Hinduism, are entirely absent from this sect. Their code is openly that of the sensualist. Their teaching is that of indulgence and the sating of desires.

Certain prominent members of this sect claim that they are the representatives on earth of *Krishna* himself. They receive the homage and gifts due to that voluptuary, as though they were, in fact, that particular member of the pantheon. Allegation of other and grosser improprieties have been freely made.

It is doubtful whether such leaders of the sect have received worship to the point of insisting upon full physical abandon by devotees. On the other hand, the many terrible statements current in India regarding downright obscenities which attend the rites among worshippers of this and other gods cannot be lightly set aside.

Feelings of love for *Krishna* are likened, in the creed of these worshippers, to the relationship which, according

to the legend, existed between the wives of the cowherds and the excessively lover-like young god.

Apart from some of the avowedly obscene rites of a few aboriginal tribes, there is, surely, no "religion" which compares with this in the deliberate and organized stimulation of eroticism, with sex-mania following in its wake as a matter of course.

In a country which is naturally, and has been for many centuries, soaked in sex, how can one expect that this obsession will ever pass away so long as even religion itself—as far as it is grasped by most of the millions whom it dominates—remains rigidly based upon as many varieties of phallicism as can be conceived by the Oriental mind?

Although this aspect of Indian life is of great importance, it obviously could not enter largely into the recently issued Simon Report, because it was strictly outside the Statutory body's terms of reference.

Even so, that document, which must stand for all time as a classic in its masterly and impartial survey of a thousand intricate problems, cannot refrain from prominent mention of the enormous influence exercised by the great Eastern religions. Dealing with Hinduism, it says: [1]

> "It touches . . . ordinary acts of daily life at nearly every point, and is a philosophy of existence which provides an outlook fundamentally different from that of the creeds of the West."

In that sentence, Sir John Simon and his colleagues have pointed to the very kernel of the Indian problem.

[1] Vol. I, page 24.

Hinduism and, to a lesser extent, Mahommedanism, and the sex ideas which have, corruptly or otherwise, sprung from those religions, are the dominant forces of the country. It is impossible to understand India without realizing the all-powerful influence exercised by those factors among the welter of races and castes.

In the next chapter I shall deal with other peculiar phases of this *malaise* of millions, this disorder operating at the very heart of Britain's Eastern Empire.

CHAPTER II

OTHER PHASES OF SEX MANIA—"BABUS" AND BEASTLINESS —FILMS AND FOLLY

IT might be concluded from the previous chapter that some of the great Hindu divisions attach a special importance to their adoration of the male sex element. But this is by no means the case.

One must bear in mind the quite numerous *Sakta* sect to whom the most important object of worship is the *Saki*, or female sex element. Believers in this creed are found in North-Eastern India. It is a sad and disturbing fact that a considerable section of the Bengali *babus*—that is to say, the rather important clerks who have permeated commerce to a tremendous extent—are adherents to this persuasion.

The *Saktas* originally believed that *Siva*, in some miraculous way, divided himself into halves, one male and one female, the male portion on the right hand side, and the female portion on the left.

This idea—appropriately enough, perhaps—resulted in a split among the *Saktas* themselves. Those who considered that the male element was more important (they called themselves the "right-hand path treaders," and they had an effective majority) would have nothing to do with those who gave first place to the female. Thus the latter section ("treaders of the left-hand path"), including the Bengali *babus* already mentioned, pursue their journey in loneliness.

Tremendous efforts have been made by these devotees to keep their rites, some of which are peculiarly abominable, a closely-guarded secret. But, in spite of this hush-hush attitude, it is known that among their observances are rituals of such licence, debauchery and general vileness that other sections of Hinduism, to their everlasting credit, have set their faces sternly against them, and have made consistent attempts to check practices calculated to shock even an Oriental saturated with sex ideas.

Yet it is, perhaps, not so very strange that such mental and physical obsessions should prevail in a land where so much religious thought is, to say the least of it, still expounded in coarse words productive of coarser notions. A charming and cultured Hindu once spent the better part of an hour arguing with me about this matter. He insisted that the Old Testament contained many references that nobody would describe as refined. In agreeing with him I ventured to call his attention to the fact that, although ancient crudities in the Bible have been preserved, Britons in the mass do not consider that circumstance to be any justification for maintaining in our twentieth century life all the social codes and practices which served mankind well in the days of Moses and Solomon.

In England, a faithful Christian, taking his stand on the complete Bible and basing his life, in all things, on the code of the Old Testament, would probably soon find himself confronted by the dock of the Old Bailey, or by a Judge of the King's Bench.

In India, however, the man who adjusts your wireless set during the afternoon, in accordance with the

ONE OF THE INNUMERABLE TEMPLES DEDICATED TO SIVA. THIS ONE STANDS IN A REMOTE PART OF THE HIMALAYAS.

newest and most scientific methods, will, quite probably, have to adjust his home and communal life, that same night, to primitive doctrines and codes which were old before Christianity was born.

Thus one gets, even in a man whose daily duties bring him into the closest contact with highly organized and cultured life, certain obsessions which might normally be expected to exist only in an aborigine. Especially does this apply to his ingrained attitude towards domestic relations between men and women.

After all, it might well be difficult for things to be otherwise when one considers that, almost from the moment he is old enough to be swaddled in a shawl and carried astride his mother's hip, his impressionable mind is infused with a brew of heady phantasy containing more than a strong dash of "sex-stuff".

The *Rigveda*, the *Tantras*, the *Sustras*, the *Sutras* (especially the last named) and a host of other ancient writings much venerated by Hindus, are plentifully sprinkled with distinctly indecorous words and thoughts. "Desire", "fervour", "potency", "gratification", and many similar expressions become so familiar to him as to colour his whole outlook on life. Hence, what the European considers abnormal is often, to the Indian, almost dull and flavourless in its entire normality, the normal thing in his case being the lofty place given to all aspects of sex—aspects which, considered together, blend into a sort of *summum bonum* of earthly existence.

It is almost impossible to divorce any consideration of this subject from the religions of India, because at nearly every point one will find that the obsession is inextricably interlocked with some creed or other.

Astounding as it may seem, this is true even of prostitution. This subject, towards which Indians display an attitude that remains almost unique, is discussed in other chapters.

Like everyone who has lived and worked among the people of the East I am prepared to admit that there is much of beauty, virtue, and lofty thinking in Hinduism. Its general code of ethics, as interpreted by men of real culture, is of the highest, but unfortunately, so far as its appeal to the masses is concerned, it cannot be separated from the pervading notion of sex as the one thing that after all really matters.

A prominent reaction of this is seen in nine-tenths of the lesser Indian-owned newspapers. Religious discussions in their columns are endless, but about them is nothing of the dignity shown by, say, a defence of the Anglican against the Roman Church, or vice versa, in a British journal. The Indian sheet thrives on two things only. Those are squabbles and dirt. There is a maximum of the sex element in both features.

To mention an instance: child-marriage, about which I shall have more to say later, is a cardinal point of Hinduism. Few writings could have exceeded in savagery or painful frankness the attacks recently made by some Indian papers against the Age of Consent Committee.

This body was set up to consider what should be done to lessen the fearful sufferings of little girls wedded to grown men. One would have imagined that Committeemen pledged to so excellent an object would have been strengthened by a wave of human kindness from half Asia.

Instead, the letters which came even to a British-owned newspaper, and went through my hands before consignment to the waste-paper basket, were inhuman in their ferocity towards the Committee, and unprintable in their phraseology.

When the Sarda Act was later passed into law, imposing penalties on marriages in which the wife is under 14, and the husband under 18, a fresh cyclone of abuse and misrepresentation was launched by sex-obsessed minds and pens.

It is now well-known that much of the unrest during 1929 and 1930 among warlike and primitive frontier tribes was directly due to the wilful lies spread by Anti-British agents, alleging that this reform was but the beginning of a deliberate campaign to uproot Hinduism and Mahommedanism, in both of which religions child-marriage is a prominent institution.

The shameless mendacity of that lie is at once obvious, when it is pointed out that the Act was passed by the Indian Legislature itself, that all the most influential Hindus regard the reforms as being long overdue, and that, among the ten members of the Age of Consent Committee presided over by Sir Moropant Vishwanath Joshi, there was only one European!

Yet, the lesser Press, with instinctive abandon, gave all the currency and impetus within its power to the statement that this was entirely a British plot aimed at one of the long-established amenities of Eastern life.

As for the main ingredients to be found in the smaller Indian newspapers, which swarm to an almost incredible extent, I have already summed these up in the word "dirt". In this category I include, naturally,

a vast aggregate mass of advertising matter, mostly belauding the miraculous virtues of aphrodisiacs to be bought from a thousand quacks. So repulsive and filthily indecent are these that an advertiser would not get one inserted by even the least reputable publication in England.

The taste of the bazaar newspaper-reader is blatantly sexual. Fortunately, the circulations of such prints are comparatively microscopic.

This fact, in the words of a conscientious education official with whom I once discussed the subject, "is probably the only consolation to be gained from the appallingly small percentage of Indians who can read any language at all."

In a revealing moment the Hindu editor of a comparatively respectable Indian daily newspaper told me :

"What my readers like most is a very full account of a sex-crime. If such an outrage involves peoples of an opposite faith, then that is still better for my sales."

Here is another example of mass-eroticism, not unmixed with a type of sex-frenzy, which is so widespread a feature of Indian life :

At Ujjain, in the sun-parched Central Indian state of Gwalior, stands one of the most famous *Siva* temples. Here, following the practice established for at least two centuries, Hindus gather in enormous throngs every twelfth year to adore *Siva*, as represented by the *linga* and his alternative emblem the bull ; for if one does not see the first token at such a temple, one will certainly encounter the other. Often both are exhibited for veneration.

Vast concourses, totalling three hundred thousand

souls or more, flock to the renowned festival. But, what is the nature of the crowds, and what do they come to worship? Not to pay homage to any of the beautiful spiritual ideas which are quite common in Hinduism; not to give thanks for such mercies as have blessed their lives; not to pray for guidance in the present days; not to seek strength to overcome sin; not to prepare the path to happiness in the hereafter.

No, they come, these hundreds of thousands from all parts, to render complete obeisance to a characteristic of a man's body, oblations to a massive graven bull. They come to offer reverence to sensuality, and prostration to non-sterility.

Forty, fifty, and possibly sixty thousand of these people, revelling in the unconventional undress in which *Siva* is reputed to have courted *Uma*, imitate him as nearly as they can. So it happens that the greater the nudity, the more the holiness.

As if this were not sufficient, thousands upon thousands of the more extravagantly-inclined among the male devotees, whose filthy matted hair is almost their only covering, paint boldly and proudly upon their foreheads, for all to behold, young and old of either sex, that abominable and characteristic symbol of *Siva*.

Frenziedly they parade among the throng, their disgustingly dirty limbs rudely rubbed over with chalk, their eyes leering, their entire being suggestive of evil pleasures.

What can one consider such men to be, except further examples of mass sex-madness!

All this, remember, is in historic and far-famed

Ujjain, which ranks among the seven most sacred centres of Hindustan ; a place honoured by the ancient Hindu geographers as the mark of their first meridian of longitude, a city whose old-time wealth and grandeur were fabulous, where, according to the legend, a mighty king had his throne and immortal examples of Sanskrit literature were born.

Such was this city until, in the fifteenth century, it was sacked by the more vigorous and, probably, cleaner-living Pathans.

Thus to-day it stands, diminished, dirty, tortuous, but perversely proud, clinging to its old rites—the rites in which nudity is allied to the worship of a god whose creed is represented as alternating between unholy voluptuousness and unfettered ferocity.

In such wise is this god worshipped—*Siva*, the irresistible lover ; *Siva*, the terrible destroyer. Strange is the whirligig of time ! To what base uses can a one-time greatness descend !

How can one say that the East is unchanging ? In this respect, and in others described in this chapter, has it not changed—and for the worse ?

Organized "religion" controls and "mentalizes" such vast percentages of the community at nearly every turn of life that it is surprising, almost refreshing, to find that at least one big and growing department of human activity has not been invaded, so far, by priestcraft. This field is the cinema. But, if religion does not enter here, greed does, and the result is equally disquieting.

Exhibitors who undertake the business of showing moving pictures which are most likely to attract a

worth-while revenue to their places of entertainment have no illusions about the relative pulling power of various films. To give the public the right thing obviously means money; not to give it means less money and a probable loss. I have never yet known an Indian who, whatever his shortcomings, laboured under the slightest misconception regarding the desirability of charming as many rupees as practicable into his pocket in the shortest possible time, and I doubt whether any white man has ever heard of, much less met, such a strange being in the East.

With the advent of the moving picture, and, more recently, the "talkies", the average cinema proprietor required only about five minutes to realize what the picture-going public wanted. It wanted sex, then more sex, and, after that, sex again. Nothing else really mattered. Connected plots and stories, even if they chanced to be so slightly constructed as to require an audience to apply its mind, say, to only two minutes of thought during a ninety minutes' run, were not, and still are not, of the slightest use.

But, show a film with sufficiently strong purple patches, and plenty of passionate moments, preferably with a "gripping" bedroom scene or two, and the rupees (1s. 6d. each) and annas (approx. one penny each) will roll in merrily. If, perchance, it also includes an appreciable percentage of cave-man violence towards a white woman, so much the better. The rupees, in that case, will come in as fast as the annas.

It is, too, not without importance to note here that, as the pathetic poverty of the great majority of

Indians—something like 90 per cent.—is much too great to allow them to enter a picture house (indeed, I doubt if five people in a hundred have so much as seen the *outside* of a cinema in India), such potential patrons as are left are necessarily confined to the relatively select and well-to-do classes who can afford the price of admission.

Yet, even so, these people, despite the fact that they belong to a comparatively upper level of society, and might, therefore, be presumed to have more elevated tastes, are as much the victims of sex-obsessions as the humblest sweeper.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that their constant association with the putrid garbage which they demand, allied to the normally sensual outlook of their daily lives, must lower the grossest among them, as time goes on, to an appalling depth of depravity.

Indian ideas as to the type of coloured posters which should be exhibited with a view to inviting patronage are so frankly hideous, crude and bestial that they would be amusing were they not so harmful. Murders, particularly those depicting the removal of the victim by strangulation, poisoning, or stabbing, are a pretty certain "bull" point.

As for the publicity matter, or "promotion-material", about such films, the hysterical nonsense freely supplied in advance to native newspapers, and even more hysterically written-up and padded out by those journals, must be seen to be believed. Like most newspaper-editors, I have received samples of this "dope", but I have never known a self-respecting controller of a

British newspaper in India who would allow any of the ridiculous effusions to appear.

Hollywood, in getting its mass-produced sex-appeal suitably packed for export to Europe, takes care that the wrappings duly emphasize, as standard specifications, the million-dollar cost, the staggering spectacular effects, and the delicate subtle debauchery of the goods invoiced to the consignee. So far as India is concerned, such effects are the sheerest waste.

I will back the Bengali *babu* against the serried might of Hollywood, at any time, in drafting an appeal likely to bear the largest fruit at the lowest cost in the biggest possible market—a result which, after all, constitutes the acid test in most business enterprise.

Give him the old, old triangle, a saintly but weak man, a wicked *Sheikh*-type Hercules, and a lovely white woman; add one or two out-and-out murders, the more brutal the better, and the fifteen-shillings-a-week *babu* will cram more "sex-appeal" into his publicity literature than the American £50-a-week star scenarist could imagine after trying every cocktail in Manhattan.

The Indian's effort may be, and often is, more or less unprintable in respectable publications; its grammar may be, and almost certainly is, of the severely exclusive type which gained him his B.A. degree at a native University; his style may suffer now and again from sideslip, but, the important point is that *he delivers the goods*. He calls a spade a spade. He gets out of the film every ounce of dramatic value. Having exhausted that, he adds, on his own account, a make-weight of eroticism and hysteria which the American scenarist might covet in vain, even in these days when Prohibition, if

Hollywood is to be believed, helps so much in stimulating a flow of ideas.

All this might be harmless enough were there not a deplorable tendency to exhibit films in which white women are not only frequently represented as loose-living creatures, but also as the victims of brutal mishandling by their white menfolk.

It is this class of rubbish—gloated over by semi-literate and completely sex-ridden Indians—which has done much to knock yet another prop from the none too stable foundation of Britain's prestige in the East.

That the evil exists, and that it is spreading alarmingly, has recently been recognized by the authorities in India, though in only a half-hearted way. A Committee was set up in October, 1927, to inquire into the whole question of the Indian film industry. It issued its report nearly a year later, but it contained so many strongly divided views, such a brave show of the "plus" sign on the one side, and so many formidable "minuses" on the other, that, in true Oriental style, it nearly cancelled itself out.

Yet, when the Committee, under the chairmanship of the Dewan Bahadur Rangachariar, began its work, it had no illusions regarding the state of affairs. At the opening session the chairman declared :

> " The sole object of the Committee is an unbiased inquiry into the persistent allegations of laxity in the censorship, and the consequent evil effects of certain films, the encouragement of the indigenous film industry, especially in view of the mass of material afforded by Indian History and

Literature, and, incidentally, the consideration of the resolution passed at the Imperial Conference in regard to the exhibition, within the Empire, of Empire films."

The recommendation, however, did encourage a degree of censorship, operating from Bombay and Calcutta, and the establishment of provincial censorship Boards. Characteristically enough, the Committee was against any preferential treatment for the admission of British-made films into the country, but, at the same time, it was naïvely suggested that the Government might grant loans to the Indian film makers on the security of produced pictures ! Counsels were opposed regarding the advisability or otherwise of a "quota" system, and wrangles on this and other points arising from the Report will probably last for years.

Meanwhile, foreign films, produced with a special eye upon the cruder Eastern markets, and containing the requisite brew of sex and sadism, continue to flow into India. They are just so much merchandise. Those who make them have no ideals above dividends, no sentiment beyond sales. If Indian cinema-goers need sex closely blended with sadism, the makers see that they get the mixture as before. If white men and women are thereby held up to a measure of contempt, what does that matter to the producer ? It is a far cry from California to Calcutta.

The hard-headed magnates who luxuriate in the mansions of Hollywood need not worry about the declining prestige of the hard-working Briton who sweats in the stew-pot of Madras.

Side by side with this steady ingress of pictorial prurience and violence, is the desire of the Indian to make his own films. Not for one moment do I infer that he is unfitted for the task. On the contrary, he has behind him an amazingly old culture, and a mass of stories, including hundreds which, for sheer beauty and romanticism, are possibly unequalled.

An Indian producer would have all these things in his favour—gorgeous sunlight, an illimitable variety of plots, the inborn skill of his countrymen as actors, and superb backgrounds. He would have at his disposal majestic architectural settings which again and again prove the truth of the old saying that the Moguls "built like Titans and finished like jewellers".

I remember, with gratitude, a few exceptionally fine films which, not long ago, were made in India. One told the immortal epic of the Taj Mahal, the marvellous story of Shah Jehan, the king of lovers, and of Mumtaz Mahal, his beautiful queen, to whom he raised at Agra the shrine that nothing on earth has yet equalled—a miracle of gleaming marble, agate and jasper, a dream of everlasting delight, ravishing with its loveliness every soul that beholds it.

Another recent Indian film related the wonderful, though piteous, story of Anarkali—a story which, if a dramatist remodelled it in modern circumstances and applied it to the life of to-day, would run in London for a year and on Broadway for two.

Yet, despite these outstanding proofs of what the country's real artists can do, I feel sure that, if Indians ever come to the point of making most of the pictures for their own exhibition, and continue to set their

faces against any preference for British films (which presumably means the actual exclusion of the British product, for I have never yet seen one in an Indian-owned cinema) then the industry will inevitably lose in tone, whatever it might gain in cash.

The truer and loftier genius of the screen will vanish if it is ever realized that a considerable fortune can be made from films in India. Immediately such a prospect seems probable, the Brahman financiers, with possibly a rich Parsee or two well to the fore, will appear in swarms. Then the vicious circle of sex-obsession will again begin to operate. Miniature Hollywoods will spring up, each with the same type of taste, and a uniform mentality. Instead of the moving, glowing stories of the immortal East, which might ennoble the audiences, and at the same time give them excellent entertainment-value, we shall once more have the old well-tried combination of sex and sadism. There will be a flood-tide of neurotic babblings, beastliness and semi-nudity.

I can imagine the maker, thinking in terms of mass-production, bending his mind to the primitive passions in which the people are still steeped throughout their daily life. And I can hear him say to his producer, as he rubs his hands, or slaps his knees: "Never mind about your stories and your fine dramatic ideas. Give them sex, my boys, and plenty of it. They will lap it up!"

I recall an interesting conversation on this subject with a highly-placed British administrator in Central India. He took the view that the out-and-out sex-film, although he did not advocate its exhibition, would,

after all, have a less harmful effect upon, say, the men of Mysore than upon the maidens of Mayfair.

"You see," he said, "Indians are impregnated with these fixed ideas from the days when they are first able to think. They live among it all their lives ; one might almost say that they breathe it. Nothing that an American or British film producer could devise would make any impression, harmful or otherwise, upon them. They are past all impressions on this subject. It would really be pouring water on a duck's back.

"Why," he went on, "we English at home are supposed to be such strangers to this sort of thing, and therefore so liable to be demoralized if we venture to look at it, that clergymen still rave in the pulpit and Press if they see an additional inch of feminine leg in an omnibus. A picture which shocks Britain, whose women only dared to shorten their skirts twelve years ago, will not necessarily upset the poise of a people, who, to say the least of it, were frank in sex matters a thousand years or so before the Battle of Hastings !"

But my friend, though partly in earnest, obviously intended me to regard that viewpoint chiefly as a cynicism.

"Yes," I replied, "but is it not also true, that, if a nation like England could be shocked at the sight of a pair of shapely legs as recently as twelve years ago, she must still hold—in reserve, as it were—such a deep sense of general decorum, that she would not tolerate the obscene films foisted upon the East ? Is there such an unexhausted reserve in India ? May not the cumulative effect of pictorial licence be sufficient to turn the scale, and change the plain sex-obsession

of the ages into an unbridled obscenity of the future ?"

The official agreed that such a danger existed. I wish he could have been with me during two episodes —small, but significant—which I witnessed in India. Here are the scenes as I remember them :

(1)

A burning night on the edge of a bazaar. Near the packed, stinking, and breathless alley-ways where the crazy top-storeys of filthy dwellings nearly meet their equally crazy opposite numbers, stands a cinema in a little open space. Outside, are a couple of flaring lights, stabbing the purple night. To me, they seem to have no purpose except to prove how puny is the radiance they dare to pit against the Oriental stars and moon.

From a reeking corner of that bazaar—a quarter known as "the street of the prostitutes", which is over against the "street of the apothecaries"—come two weedy Hindus. They slouch across to the cinema. They take up a station near the bright lights which I now realize to be not poor competitors of the moon and stars, but simply the means of illuminating a gross, semi-obscene wall-poster focused in the rays. There the Hindus remain. One of them is astride a fetid open sewer which traverses this space, while the other sits carelessly on the verge of that noisome drain.

They fidget in that nervous characteristic way of the young men of the East. They feast their eyes on the lighted-up lasciviousness overhead. They pass their

tongues to and fro between dry lips with a little clicking sound. Both hope, no doubt, that the gods will soon send them annas enough to enter beyond the teasing doors, so that they may see that tantalizing atrociousness spring to life on the screen. Meanwhile, the suggestive poses, though immovable as a profane sculpture, must serve their purpose.

(2)

I sit inside a cinema in a great Indian city. It is a stifling August night. The interior of the ramshackle building is inexpressibly hot and foul. My seat is in a balcony in a recess, where one can see without being seen—the type of accommodation that is so ideal in the eyes of lovers.

The whir of monster electric fans, swishing ceaselessly around, almost drowns the strains from the orchestra, consisting of nothing but a tinny piano played by a Bengali with the eyes of mysticism, the nose of æstheticism, and the mouth and chin of depravity.

Below, the cheaper seats in front contain a sprinkling of Hindus, Mahommedans, Afghans, Ghurkas, Malays, Punjabis, Madrassis, and men and women of twenty other races, creeds and castes. All are held by the picture—a made-in-America affair, too crude for the rustic low-brow "hicks" of that country, too coarse for England, too violently neurotic for any sphere of money-making activity except the Near, Middle and Far East.

I squirm as I see that the characters in this travesty of an entertainment are supposed to be British. The

A FINE TYPE OF AN AGED MENDICANT PRIEST IN CENTRAL INDIA.

men whom it purports to show have a system of ethics and a code of misconduct that a monkey would not tolerate. The women with whom they associate display morals compared with which a fowl-run is an Uplift Association. The characters in this film appear to have no useful work to do in the world; at any rate, during the time they poison the screen with their presence they have nothing to do except to encompass the ruin of each other's wives or husbands or lovers, in an environment of stately marble mansions, black servants, and rank indecency.

There is one "great" scene—the attempted rape of a lovely white woman by a white man who, because she resists, slowly, deliberately and relentlessly strangles her.

Many close-ups of this revolting murder are presented. They include a scientific study of the grip of the man's hands on the victim's graceful throat, showing the veins of the strangler standing out like whipcords as his fingers busy themselves in the yielding flesh.

Then we have a carefully registered impression of the murderer's demoniacal face in the act of taking a woman's life in exchange for thwarted lust. We are treated to a magnification of the killer's eyes, starting from the head, and glinting with all the Satanic light that the American retouch artist could impart to them.

The scene switches on to the dying woman. The camera extracts from her last contortions every ounce of what the filth-purveyors schedule as "emotion value". First, a close-up of her wildly-lolling eyes as the head is forced back by the slayer. Then a representation of her

protruding tongue as her fate crowds upon her. After that, a carefully-done survey of her head as it hangs over the back of a luxurious settee, swaying limply from side to side, as though dislocated.

The Bengali one-man orchestra mechanically rattles out a few bass notes presumably representative of her ultimate agonies. He has seen this so often that the salt has lost its savour.

But how the Indian spectators love it all! How the Hindus and Mahommedans and Afghans (I recall that there are cinemas to-day even in Kabul) relish it! How the Gujratis, Malays, Punjabis, Pathans, and Madrassis adore it!

Violence is what they like—and preferably violence associated with sex. They do not shriek with delight like English audiences, when something deliciously funny happens in the film. I hear none of those little bursts of merriment, so typical of Britons, when episodes of comic relief (and, strangely enough, there are quite a number in this picture) are flashed before us. But, when the over-sexed lover seizes the white woman in his effort to subdue her, or, failing that, to destroy her, a nauseating surge of guttural delight comes to my ears from nearly every part of the hall. The deep-set emotions are freed. Natures already saturated in the idea that passions, however violent, are, in themselves, some of life's great goals, literally wallow in the feast spread before them.

It is sickening. I can stand no more of it. As I leave the cinema and step gingerly over the troughs of putrefaction with which so many of these places of "amusement" surround themselves—their outdoor token

of their indoor mentality—I wonder why these "entertainments" are tolerated.

With the spread of this class of film—the only kind which, presumably, brings easy profit to the Hindu proprietors—what will the Indian eventually think of white men and women? Remember that a great proportion of the audiences cannot read, but they can all grasp the meaning of these vile importations. Brought up on such trash, they are beginning to think that the average white man, in his home life in his own country, is a beast incarnate, that his attitude towards the opposite sex is that of the farmyard. How can we hope to maintain public respect for Britons as administrators of India if those notions are deliberately encouraged by money-grubbers who, through their very pursuance of this policy, cannot be other than our enemies?

Years ago, it was argued in favour of the widespread establishment of cinemas in India that men and women would thereby be encouraged to enlarge their horizon and to get away from the monotonous, narrow, and, in many cases, harmful obsessions of their home-lives. The idea was excellent, but what has occurred? People are lured into a psychological—not to say physiological—atmosphere worse than anything surrounding them in their normal existence. Even the most depraved sects do not commit so many sins per hour as the beastly picture-characters who are represented as average Britons!

Can Britain rule, wisely and effectively, three hundred and twenty million Asiatics when the very rulers' kith and kin are nightly presented to ever-increasing audiences not as members of the universal human family whom

God created a little lower than the angels, but, rather, as creatures whom the Americans have made only a little higher than the apes ?

Simla will really have to give a little less time to the compilation of statistical tomes and natty graphs. It should descend, now and then, from its Himalayan detachment into the din and stench of the bazaars. It should note what is happening there. And it should see to it that the film—which next to the Press is the greatest civilizing and elevating secular force at the disposal of mankind—does not, for private greed and public hatred, turn these places into warrens of anti-British wickedness.

CHAPTER III

THE DREAMERS AWAKE—TO WHAT?—WILL INDIA EVER TURN ATHEISTIC?

WITH a screech of brakes and a blaring note from the electric horn, a gleaming saloon car draws up outside a popular restaurant in an Indian city. Instantly it is encircled by an amazingly dense crowd of gamins and bedraggled little girls, some of whom are already widows. All of them surge around the doors, windows, luggage-grid and radiator until there is not even squeezing-room for another. All of them yell in a mad frenzy that pierces the air more shrilly than the cries of any crowd of Bank Holiday excursionists at Waterloo station. Compared with this excitement, Bedlam is as restful as the Vendee.

It is not the arrival of a ruling prince which has caused this commotion. The occupant of the car is not a Rajah, who will scatter diamonds for doles. Would you believe it? The car is occupied by none other than a rather bored-looking and corpulent Indian. He keeps a shop, about twelve feet by six, down in the bazaar quarter, and, in his spare time, when he is not sleeping among the disarray of his goods, lends microscopic sums at mammoth interest. The turmoil is due simply to the possibility that he will select one of the storming party to watch his car while he is inside the restaurant,

and perhaps reward the lucky guard with a quarter of an anna (about one farthing).

He leisurely descends and is nearly rent asunder by the ferocity of the trade-rivals. Pointing his finger at random towards a little girl (I hope, for her own sake, that she is one of the needy widows) he languidly grunts the monosyllable *tum !* ("you !"). The child proudly takes possession ; the merchant departs to the lights and gaiety and fine food within ; the war for the moment is over. Presently, another resplendent car glides up, then another and another. Soon, there is a luxurious line that savours more of the exterior of the Ritz-Carlton than a scene in mid-Asia.

Do the majority of these vehicles hold representatives of the "bloated" British rulers of India against whom politicians and Indian-owned newspapers declaim so loudly ? They do not. For every white man who drives up, there are at least ten Indians who arrive in this way. Further, as one who has figured on several occasions in incidents like this, I can vouch for the fact that, whereas the hardworking Briton often can afford nothing better than a very ordinary tourer, or even a "baby" car (mine was then a humble specimen of the latter class), the biggest and most powerful, and certainly the most ornate limousines, are those of the Indian professional men and merchants.

Against every new arrival, a mass-formation offensive is hurled by the gamins. Almost it seems as if fully one half of the poorer children in that city have appointed themselves car-watchers as a matter of course.

I have detailed this episode because it throws a rather significant light on a new outlook which is

gradually being adopted in what is miscalled the "unchanging" East. The increased use of the motor-car is only one factor in the change.

India is not the same as she was some years ago. She cannot be. The wives of prosperous Hindu or Mahommedan traders to-day discuss the relative points of electric vacuum cleaners with ubiquitous American salesmen. They telephone to the shops for household supplies. They study the handsomely produced catalogues of great Indian stores as keenly as a Battersea woman pores over anything that comes out of High Street, Kensington. They have giant electric fans that a touch of the finger can regulate to any speed. They have electric irons, kettles and hair-driers! Choice goods from the remotest parts of the country are delivered to their door by the Indian postman, who has been familiar with the C.O.D. system for years, the only difference being that he knows the scheme as V.P.P. (value payable post).

I have used an automatic dial-your-number telephone to ring up a friend in a remote spot of the lower Himalayas at a time when the London dailies were almost lyrical in their description of this new marvel which still had not been introduced to the capital of the Empire.

In the larger towns of India, all these are commonplaces. Though the vast majority of the dwellers in the bazaars have not yet been able to own or to use such adjuncts to life, they know a great deal about them. To make a street arab in a city turn his head to-day to look at a speeding motor-car, you would have to drive one with a radiator of gold and body-work

shaped like a lion. He is interested only in cars that draw up near him, and then only because of the coin he would earn for "minding" it. Hence, he and his kind lurk in battalions at the more popular stopping-places. In his heart of hearts, even the poorest town-dwelling Indian youth hopes, some day, to have enough rupees to buy a car. That wish may, in time, become as strong as his desire to possess a young wife.

The truth is that sections of India—small as yet—are becoming more worldly as their contact with Western influence increases. So-called "dreamers" are awakening, to become materialists. That, perhaps, is one reason why Mr. Ghandi is always so insistent upon the need for cleaving to the more primitive conditions of work—witness his ideal of the spinning-wheel in every home—and to more austere views of life, such as his abstract æstheticism. The same idea, and a similar warning against the danger of becoming involved in the hypnotic recklessness of high-speed modern life, can be traced in the writings of Rabindranath Tagore.

This raises a fascinating and vital question. Is India in general likely to turn from her multiple gods to one other god—that of self-seeking pleasure and pure materialism—as she comes more and more into contact with modern scientific knowledge, so often dramatically opposed to the more primitive elements in her religion ?

In the previous chapter I asked whether the great sub-continent which Britain administers is not changing —and for the worse ? This is a question which I have discussed with many men having a close knowledge of the subject ; also, I have studied it on the spot.

That certain reactions are occurring is apparent to

any close observer, and that they will continue to operate in an ever-widening circle is equally obvious. Nor are the new ideas which are constantly being assimilated purely political. The world of newspaper-readers may be under the impression that Indian minds are almost exclusively occupied with matters like *Swaraj* (which once merely meant "home-rule", but now, by order of the Nationalists, stands for "complete independence") or communal representation, or the working of Dyarchy. In believing this, the public have been misled, chiefly because the politician in the East, as well as in the West, usually makes the most noise and because Indian journalists are still under the impression that, next to sex and crime, people prefer to read about politics.

Meanwhile, amid all the thunderous clamour of the Swarajists and anti-Swarajists, an equally momentous development, the growth of frank materialism, has been shaping itself. Subtle, unadvertised, non-vocal, it is nevertheless making headway in the chief cities and towns, peopled by possibly a tenth of the total population. The masses, dispersed over the villages, are not much, if in any way, affected yet, but in their case, too, such a change is bound to make itself felt in time.

I know of no *volte face* more dramatic and complete than that which occurs when an Indian, suddenly abandoning a medley of gods and ancient customs, decides to "turn Western" in real earnest. If, as is so often the case, he happens to have a little money, he undergoes a quick-change act that many a stock actor might envy.

Away goes the *dhoti*, and out comes a lounge suit

on Savile Row lines, followed by the brightest brown shoes and the latest thing in collars and ties. Off comes the turban, to be replaced by a soft felt hat worn at an angle one degree acuter than the most daring bachelor in Bond Street. When he signs the register in an hotel he sets down his nationality as "British" with an extra flourish. The *tonga* or rickshaw knows him no more and he acquires a "sports-six", with the loudest possible horn, which, while the car is in motion, he sounds continually, as is the way of the East, until the battery is exhausted.

He goes to all the plays he can possibly attend, and turns up at all the "new thought" discussions. He even drinks cocktails, and appears at the races. In short, he becomes such an out-and-out materialist that, after a few weeks, the days when he performed *puja* to one of his gods seem to be almost an eternity away.

There are thousands in the East like him, and often they are the sons of rich self-made shopkeepers and moneylenders, or of not-so-rich officials. Many of them have spent a few years at schools in England. Some have been to our Universities. Recruits to this style of existence are coming along steadily.

Their lives would appear to be quite aimless, and, at first glance, no better or worse than the pleasure-loving young idlers of the rising generation in England against whose conduct and mentality elderly magnates and middle-aged clerics continually do cry.

If that were all that could be said against him, he would, in fact, be harmless enough. But, the trouble in his case is that, in casting off, as it were, his former

gods, and substituting nothing for them, either nobler or lower, he is left with a mere negation. Formerly he had been able to appeal to something outside himself, as it were, to a symbol or an ideal that held elements of the mystic beyond the mundane plane of ordinary existence. Now, all that has gone. The mystery, the suggestion of a subnormal, hidden, perhaps higher, influence on his destiny has vanished. So the only thing to which he can turn is a stark materialism indistinguishable from atheism.

I firmly believe that this tendency, slowly but irresistibly, is permeating those members of Indian society especially the younger people, who, being engaged in trades and professions in the towns, have money to spend. But the change is not confined to the youthful; nor is it necessarily restricted to the merchant and professional classes.

Stroll up Malabar Hill, Bombay, towards the eerie Towers of Silence where the vultures, ever-waiting, swoop down to gorge themselves upon the corpses of once-wealthy Parsees exposed therein for the carrion-birds' banqueting, and you will see gorgeous parades of ultra-modern pleasure-pursuing Indians. The blazing sun magnifies the spotless sheen of high-powered cars as they imperiously flash by with their loads of riches and beauty, youth and age, culture and ignorance, romance and lust. The palsied beggar must scramble, as best he may, on to the footpath to make way for the glitter of Ormuz. The untouchable sweeper, whose very shadow is a contamination, cannot venture even to raise his eyes to the big-paunched Rajput who glides past in the most ornate limousine of all. The

bent old *dhobi* (washerman), whose spidery legs speak of starvation, is cursed in unprintable language by a fierce Sikh chauffeur for daring to stagger with his crushing load too near the wheels of luxury.

Almost all classes, as well as many creeds, are represented in this car-parade. One-time *babus*, enriched through a lucky stroke of business; small-shop tradesmen, retired on the proceeds of a shrewd, and probably sharp, deal; hereditary landowners with vast estates; petty pleaders with private means—all these, and hundreds more, expose their prosperity and modernism to the medley of people who throng the gateway of India. The day has gone when the Indian who suddenly became possessed of a comfortable competency dug a hole in which to hide the cash from the sight of enemies and marauders. Give him the money now, and, if he can read and write, or knows something of town life, as a gradually increasing number do, he will at once be tempted to obtain a car and to become the Oriental counterpart of a "knut".

But, as I have suggested, he tends, at the same time, to become something much grosser and more material. Too often he develops into a purely self-seeking libertine. For he has been jolted too quickly from one extreme to the other. In the West, the environment of centuries and the gradual improvements in conditions have prepared men for such changes, with the result that they "fit in" more naturally when suddenly blessed by what the world calls fortunate circumstances. Having no such training, the enriched Hindu frequently loses most of his mental poise. Hence, observers and philosophers in his country are deploring the spread

of a wave of materialism, atheism and, worse still, open sensuality.

Professor Dakshinaranjan Shastri, lecturer at the Sanskrit College, Calcutta, in his absorbing study, "Charvaka-Shashti" (Indian Materialism), published in Calcutta two years ago, has made deep researches into the heretic literature of his country, and, writing of the ancient Lokayata atheistic philosophy which Charvaka is believed to have founded—a philosophy declaring that the truest aim in life is "the full enjoyment of the senses"—he comes to this definite conclusion :

> ". . . the Lokayatikas have tried to show that pleasure, and not pain, is the very essence of existence, that this world is not a vale of tears, that we should equally embrace pleasure and pain, sorrow and happiness, peace and troubles. . . . Scientific researches have not yet been successful in proving the existence of a soul different from the body.
>
> "Thus the view of Charvaka is being established, day by day, very firmly."

Further light on this excessively worldly and pleasure-ridden cult which, admittedly, is "being established very firmly", is provided by the Professor who proceeds to outline its tenets. Quoting Charvaka's view of the Hindu scriptures, he says :

> ". . . the Vedas are not only human compositions but even worse. The buffoon, the knave, and the demon—these are the three authors of the Vedas.
>
> "All the obscene rites commended for the queen in the horse sacrifice have been invented by knaves. So also the custom of giving presents to priests and that of eating flesh has been commended by night-prowling demons. . . .

> "The exercises of religion and the practices of æstheticism are merely a means of livelihood for men devoid of intellect and manliness."

Other extracts from this out-and-out material creed, as exposed by the Professor, are :

> "The priests say that the beast slain in a sacrifice will itself go to heaven. How is it that they do not kill their own old fathers in a sacrifice in order to send them directly to heaven ?"
>
> "Women are lustful and fallen creatures. The world is naturally under the influence of passion. There is no man who has not committed sin through intercourse with women."
>
> "All are equally entitled to enjoy sensual pleasure, which is the *summum bonum* of human life."
>
> "Prosperity is heaven. There is no particular place named heaven. By heaven we mean only the enjoyment of pleasure."

Professor Shastri shrewdly observes that "according to this system, the word 'hell' means merely the endurance of pain."

This, then, is the creed—the denial of every type of godhead and the enthronement of all sensual pleasures —which is steadily becoming established.

Can one wonder that, in commending Professor Shastri's valuable exposition of it, Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Bhagabatkumar Sastri writes :

> "It (Vedic culture) has held the field so long, new problems of life have now arisen. It is useless to shut one's eyes to an obvious fact."

Both these scholars have performed a public service in explaining, and consequently warning people

against, a creed which, old and evil as it is, appears to be gaining ground among some sections in direct ratio with the modernization of India.

Many other writers have regretted this tendency, and I believe that many more will be moved to do so in the future.

Reflecting on these things, I think again of the eloquent pleasure-parade on Malabar Hill—not entirely a white man's affair, as so many people in Britain imagine, but predominantly an Indian display—and I realize that the dreamers of the East are awakening. But to what ?

CHAPTER IV

"GIVE ME A SON!"

LET me take you, for a little while, into a humble Indian home, not in one of the greater cities, but in a small country town where the people, like most Indians, are dependent upon agriculture. There, let me introduce you to a little girl. We will call her Harbheji, though that is not her real name. She is a pensive, sad-eyed, though charming child, and she had her fourteenth birthday not many weeks ago. Her hair is raven; her skin is unblemished and pleasant; her clothes are neat, but none too clean.

In England, she would be skipping along a country lane, merrily swinging her satchel, on her way to school. She would be working at her lessons in the morning, romping with other girls at playtime, studying again in the afternoon, and serenely looking forward to a happy evening with her parents. She might even be contemplating the "treat" of a visit to "the pictures" in the nearest town; and, at any rate, there would always be the wireless set at home to give her an interesting hour or two.

How tremendously different is the lot of Harbheji, the Indian child! For her, there are no "pictures"—except, perhaps, the sort described elsewhere in this book—no riotous rompings, no foot-tapping music or jolly entertainments over the ether. Her home, too,

is not so pleasant, so healthy, or so restful as that of her English sister. It is a small and tumble-down affair, standing a little distance from the hot redolence of a rutty road where the bullock-carts dawdle along and where Jai Ram drives his goats, amid whirlwinds of dust, to their scanty pasture. Behind the house is a noisome yard—the compound—consisting of a few disreputable shacks surrounded by scraggy hens that scratch greedily among the fetid refuse for the choice tit-bits they can never find.

Over the doorway of Harbheji's home is a foul and tattered fibre screen, whose function is to break the onslaught of the sun's savage rays. If once there were windows in this house, they have since been concealed pretty effectively by dirt, damage, and decrepitude.

Inside, the rooms are sunless, airless and dilapidated. Nevertheless, they are choked with humanity—men, women and children, with a preponderance of women and children. What is the place, you ask, which Harbheji occupies among this packed and perspiring congregation? Is she—as she would be in England—a sort of in-between child, a useful nursemaid for the younger ones, a playmate for those nearer her own age, a juvenile to be teased and petted in turn by her older sisters and brothers?

Good gracious! No! *She is the mother in the home! And she is expecting shortly to have her third baby!* The first two were daughters. Oh, if only there might be a son this time!

Poor little soul! She was a mother at twelve and again at thirteen. When first she went down to the deep valleys, with none but the brutal, half-blind

dhai (midwife) to attend her and multiply her sufferings a hundredfold, she nearly passed to the hereafter. Things were not so bad, though they were terrible enough, with the coming of the second baby; and, now, Harbheji, her soul seized with a mixture of fatalism and fear, is awaiting her third adventure, knowing not what there might be in store for her.

Though you may be shocked by this—though you may feel, as I felt, a surge of pity—yet it must be remembered that, to Indians, these circumstances are among the most normal things in the world. There are millions of tortured, shrinking souls like this child's—exactly how many millions I cannot say, for vital statistics in India are notoriously erratic and incomplete. Still, from figures that have passed through my hands from time to time, it would probably be an underestimate to state that this girl is merely one of *about ten million children who become wives and mothers before they are twelve*!

The extraordinarily comprehensive report of the Simon Commission mentions an official estimate that about half of the girls of India are married before they are fifteen and that, of this number, more than two millions are actually wives by the time they are ten! As there are at least one hundred and fifty-five million females in the whole country (a total, incidentally, about ten millions less than that of the males), it is a conservative assumption that of that number there must be between eight and twelve millions of married children about the age of twelve. Indeed, so tremendous has been the rush among youths and men to secure very young mates, that there are to-day more than a hundred

THE TOWERS OF SILENCE ON MALABAR HILL, BOMBAY, WHERE THE PARSIS LEAVE THEIR DEAD TO BE DEVOURED BY VULTURES. NOTE THE GRIM BIRDS OF PREY ON THE ROOF.

thousand females who were *widowed before they were ten*! Regarding the diabolical fate of such widows, I shall have more to say in the next chapter.

Compared with the woes of so many other children caught up in the fearsome and fantastic web of Indian matrimony, the life of our little Harbheji, mother and mother-to-be, is not so very unhappy. There are consolations. For instance, her husband, a youth occupying a petty Government post, is still alive and is able to attend to his official duties for at least nine-tenths of the year, though, like most of his type, he is rather a weakling. He is about nineteen, and, when one is already a father of two, and very nearly of three, at that age, and when one lives in an up-country region where poverty is rife and food none too plentiful, it would be rather too much to expect the head of such a household to possess much physical reserve. But, on the other side of the scale, his employment is safe and his prospects are reasonably good. He expects, about ten years hence, to be receiving ten rupees (fifteen shillings) a month more salary than he now earns, bringing his present income, the equivalent of thirteen shillings a week, up to the comparatively splendid total of sixteen shillings and ninepence. So you will see, matters might have been a good deal worse in Harbheji's home.

For the rest, the dense concourse which I have already mentioned as thronging this little house consists of that powerful and ever-present personage—the wife's mother-in-law, with several of the latter's sisters and a minor swarm of her own unmarried children.

Thus, Harbheji, though her time is drawing near,

finds herself very busy. Much and constant service is expected from this wistful child—service to her husband, to her mother-in-law, to her array of aunts-in-law and sisters-in-law, and—a duty she must never forget—to all the household gods whose number, nature and precedence, which vary endlessly in different homes, are rigidly determined by the particular caste of her husband.

In this hierarchy it is, naturally, the husband who comes first. He is the most-to-be-considered individual. When he addresses her, little Harbheji must rise and stand respectfully before him, her eyes dutifully downcast, something after the fashion of a raw recruit facing the commanding officer in the orderly-room. When he eats, she must tactfully retire, for it is ordained that she must always have her meals *after* him, and she must be grateful for any scraps that may then be left.

And then, when he walks abroad, proudly sporting the showiest embroidered cap, so beloved of *babu* and official underling, how very cringing and subservient our little Harbheji must be! What though she has borne two of this pompous fellow's children? What though the hag of a *dhai* has torn and mutilated her at an age when she should know more of laughter than of labour? What though her shrieks of terror have rent the tropical nights when her heart should have followed the beckoning of song and romance rather than of *Siva* and his symbol? These sacrifices count for nothing. She might, indeed, be less than the dust for all the attention that her lord publicly pays to her. Her husband—good fellow enough, no doubt, according

to his own light—considers that this heroic child is not good enough to step by his side when he presents himself, and his importance, to the gaze of the outside world.

The wonderful and long-suffering girl-woman is not, and never can be, socially co-equal with this thirteen-shillings-a-week specimen of Hindu minor officialism. So she must meekly trail ten or twelve paces behind this very vocal and superior—if, unfortunately, somewhat knock-kneed—mate of hers.

This is not calculated cruelty, however barbaric it may appear. As a matter of fact, the husband, in this instance, is rather an advanced and enlightened person, judging by Oriental standards, although, according to Western outlooks, it would be generally agreed that he is scarcely worthy to tie the laces of Harbheji's one precious pair of shoes, so pathetically seldom worn.

Everything that he does is merely in pursuance of the custom of the country. He is no worse than—and, in many respects, he is considerably better than—millions of his fellows. It must be accounted to his credit that he has not, like such a great mass of others, condemned his tiny partner to a life of the strictest *purdah*, or enforced seclusion.

Had he done so, pens more eloquent than mine would be required to describe the sufferings to which Harbheji would have been sentenced. I doubt whether any writer has ever swept the lash of his scorn, with adequate strength, across the *purdah* system as applied in its fullest sense to the mates of certain Hindus.

Under it, wives—merely little girls as often as not—are compelled to spend the whole of their days, waking

and sleeping, in the darkest, dingiest and foulest room of the house. I have seen many such rooms, though, naturally, as a white man, I have not been able, owing to the strict conventions, to enter them at a time when they were peopled by their pitiable prisoners. These apartments are sunless and often filthy. Usually, their only ventilation is from a little aperture bored through the brick or mud wall at such a height that it is impossible either to see or to be seen through it.

For furniture, a crazy *charpoy* (native bed), with the legs half-rotten through the activities of white ants, ceaselessly attacking in mass formation, is deemed sufficient. In houses of a slightly better class, a rude box or two, a mud vessel for the storage of grain, and an unsteady earthen jar containing water might be added to the dismal equipment. These are the only surroundings of the poor creatures who must stay among them from the day of their marriage in early childhood until the time comes when their racked bodies, unable to endure the vileness of existence, pass into the care of their gods and, it is to be hoped, into a happier reincarnation.

Like that of poor Harbheji, their sole function in life is to breed a progeny, preferably one that includes as many sons as possible.

Egged on by the Brahmans, whose creed must be obeyed, the constant cry of the Hindu husband is "*Give me a son!*" That is a supreme demand of his religion. It ranks above all other needs. It is vital to a man's welfare in the hereafter. Without a son to honour his memory and to propitiate the gods on his behalf, the Hindu on his deathbed would, indeed,

be of all men the most miserable. It is laid down, as an inflexible and inviolate law, that it is a son alone who can, by his devotions, take the necessary steps towards ensuring that the soul of the dead parent, in its transmigration, shall be reborn in a suitable form and, if possible, into a higher status than was experienced during the last sojourn on earth.

All this brings excellent and profitable business to the Brahman caste from which alone the priests, who pocket the fees for the various propitiations, are recruited. Having a monopoly of priestcraft, deliberately created and maintained, it is obviously a matter of the utmost importance to the Brahmans, the highest section of Hinduism, that all these revenue-earning practices should be sternly enforced and, better still, extended.

It will be readily seen that the place of a wife, whether a little girl, such as Harbheji, or a mature woman, is essentially utilitarian in the home of the very orthodox Hindu. Not to put too fine a point on it, it is simply the place of a breeder. The species must be reproduced, and—equally imperative—it must be reproduced in the male sex.

"*Give me a son!*" It is the eternal, never-to-be-disregarded cry. To fail in this is to fail in everything. From the earliest glimmerings of Hindu history, that has been the inexorable law. Women, and little girls, too, have existed for nothing else, and, through the customs of generations, they have come to believe that they should not desire to exist for anything else.

"*Give me a son!*" Should a wife do so—excellent! She will, in due course, be expected to provide another,

and then yet more, for the glory of her husband and the gods.

And so her mission in life will go on, a mission of almost incessant child-bearing, till disease, or age, or death, shall give her release.

If daughters are born too often, or if—most calamitous of all—her first three or four babies in succession should be girls, how crushing is her misfortune! In that case, the gods are surely angry with her for some great sin that she has committed in this or in a past life; and there is now every likelihood that her husband will regard her as a being accursed. He will look upon her as a creature who not only demeans and disgraces him before the world but also as one who imperils his immortal soul. To him, that is of so much greater importance than any soul that his wife may, perchance, possess.

Further, and more dreadful still, the non-birth of sons may cause him, after his passing, to haunt for evermore, in earth-bound spirit-form, the place which was his worldly habitat at the time of death. There is no fear worse than that to an orthodox Hindu.

Imagine, then, the agony of mind, the tribulation of soul, the torment of body endured by a *purdah* wife in such circumstances. If there are Gethsemanes as grim, I still have to hear of them.

This I know: no Englishman would treat his dog in such a way. He would not allow a living and faithful creature to be deprived of light and air and exercise and all outside companionship for virtually an entire lifetime.

White men, the so-called "oppressors" of India,

have been smartly punished at home, at the instigation of the R.S.P.C.A., for cruelties not a tithe so shocking as those which are perpetrated, year in and year out, upon the defenceless bodies of millions of young Indian women and little children in the name of religion and for the added enrichment of bloated Brahmans.

I was glad to note, during the time I was in India—the greater part of 1928—a marked tendency by the better type of Hindu and Mahommedan (for *purdah* largely prevails also in Islam) to condemn this savage system. The movement towards reform is still making headway, but progress is lamentably slow, for the custom has deep triple roots, religious, social and economic.

How vast is the evil, how appalling the sum-total of misery, will be evident when it is realized that according to a most modest computation, there must be, to-day, *at least fifteen millions of wives, a large proportion of whom are nothing less than little girls who ought to be in the schoolroom, sentenced for the rest of their days to a living death in a reeking cubicle. Fifteen millions! or more than a third of the population of Britain!*

They never see the life, the comparatively happy and care-free outdoor life, that moves outside their *purdah* (literally, a "curtain"). They are without friends, or even acquaintances, save, perhaps, the mother-in-law who must constantly be propitiated and, naturally, the omnipotent husband, the lord and master whose demands must ever be obeyed.

There these poor mites spend their sad succession of pain-stabbed days and nights. Their mental and physical tortures, in a country ravaged by loathsome

diseases, plagued by stinging insects, and scorched by a temperature that commonly reaches the ferocious point of a hundred and twenty degrees *in the shade*, cry aloud to high Heaven. These things are an outrage against every instinct of individual decency and national humanity.

In one of the towns on the burning plains of Northern India, I was entertained by a very lovely high-caste Hindu woman whose husband, luckily for her, is an opponent of the *purdah* fetish. The conversation turned upon this question of walled-in child-wives, and I asked her for her frank opinion.

"Oh !" she said, "I think it is simply too dreadful, especially when a woman becomes the mother of a daughter instead of a badly needed son."

"Supposing," I asked, "that the husband, after several years, is still presented with no son—what then ?"

"In that case," my hostess replied, "he could, so to speak, cast her off, not by divorce, for that is not a Hindu practice, but simply by taking another wife. He would, naturally, be under an obligation to maintain the first one, but, unfortunately—and I speak from a woman's point of view—he need not do more than allow her just sufficient to keep herself alive. You see, although most of our men remain faithful to one wife, a Hindu is within the strict letter of the law if he marries as often as he pleases."

"But," I objected, "the first wife, if she has always been secluded in *purdah*, is surely not likely to suffer anything much worse than she has endured already, even if her husband does take another partner. Perhaps she might be glad to be rid of his personal attentions."

"Ah! my friend," returned the woman, "you do not understand. Think of the disgrace, the terrible sickness of soul, of that first wife. Not only does everybody in her family circle know that she cannot bear a son, but she also becomes a contemptible, a discarded woman. It is held that this is due to some grievous sin that she has committed. For her, then, there can be no salvation. This is her ultimate disaster."

So we can realize the torturing anxiety of little fourteen-year-old Harbheji, wife of the petty *babu*, to whose household let us return. What if this child should fail her husband for the third time? How can she face him, and the mother-in-law, and the angry gods whose symbols decorate her dwelling? Surely, thinks Harbheji, death itself would be better than that!

She reflects that her husband, whatever faults another civilization might find in him, allows her as much freedom as her upbringing has taught her to expect. Indeed, she has more liberty than thousands of other wives in this town. Morning and evening, she can still go to the well and draw the supplies of domestic water, for her abode has not yet reached that plutocratic stage at which water is to be obtained by the mere turning of a tap. Also, she can go for walks with her husband, so long as she keeps her distance in the ordained and respectful manner already mentioned.

Then, again, during the long blazing days, in the few minutes which she can snatch from a thousand duties, she is able to exchange with her hordes of relatives all those bits of feminine gossip that never fail to delight the hearts of all the world's women and girls. She is very human and natural, is our little

Harbheji. Her eyes will light up when she hears the latest tit-bit about young Bhagwati's newest shawl or the wonderful boy baby with which the gods blessed the house of a friend last week. In all these respects, she is just as typical and as lovable an example of true femininity as any adolescent maiden in Pimlico or Newcastle, Paris or Rome, New York or Ottawa.

But, in one vital thing, she is utterly different. It is not given to any little girl in those other cities to creep away at frequent intervals and to pray ardently to a whole collection of gods in an assorted pantheon —to pray, and pray, and pray that she, even though her childhood is still upon her, might be delivered of a man-child *this* time because the two babies whom she has already borne are, alas! merely girls. No; it is not the lot of those other more fortunate ones in the white countries across the waters to make these obeisances in a fever of fear, to plead, with screwed-up nerves and a suspense of soul, that her coming infant *must* be a boy lest the outer darkness be her lot.

Thus it is that Harbheji grows aged even while she is yet too young for the responsibilities thrust upon her. Her anxieties spread into an ocean of fear as the fateful day looms up.

She is so terribly anxious to do her proper duty by her husband. That is the one compelling urge in her life, just as it is in the case of her millions of sisters.

Study her when she goes to the well at eventide. The merciless heat of the day is over. The sun has nearly gone, and the sky is a glory of gold. The flaming panorama kisses the peaks of the Western Ghats near which Harbheji's home-town is situated. The cows

and bullocks and goats are being driven to safety for the night. You can trace their progress by the clouds of dust and the swarms of flies that accompany their going.

Women and maidens are gathered at the wayside well, Harbheji among them. Their vivid red, blue and yellow *saris* are wonderful splashes of colour, forming a beautiful relief against the burnt-up brown of the parched countryside.

Mark the complete, satisfying gracefulness of these women and little girls! If only the front row members of the "boosted" beauty-parades in London and Broadway theatres could learn to walk and generally deport themselves even remotely like these small-town Indian wives and daughters, how much greater value would patrons get for their money! There is litheness in every movement; poise, balance and rhythm are reflected in each gesture.

Watching this little company you would think that its members had not a care in the world. They laugh, and exchange news, and chatter over pleasant trivialities in the rather strained, high-pitched and unmusical voice which, from an æsthetic view-point, constitutes almost their solitary failing.

The water drawn, and the gossip finished, they walk away with that consummate grace which is the envy of the Western world. On their heads, they balance the heavy pitchers of water—the simple fact which contains the whole secret of their marvellous carriage.

This is the apparently care-free and almost merrily fatalistic side of their life which they choose to show to the outside world.

The stark truth, however, is that there can be very little, if any, true happiness in an existence like that so bravely endured by Harbheji. How can her mind know any real contentment when, as I have explained, she is constantly haunted by the dread that she may ail her husband in his greatest need? She realizes—not, perhaps, without gratitude—that she belongs to a lower "sept", or sub-section of her husband's caste, and that her father, by whom the marriage was arranged without consulting her in the slightest way, paid a considerable sum to her present father-in-law for the splendid privilege of securing, for Harbheji, a partner of a superior status.

She remembers, and, no doubt, she is often reminded of the fact, that her father, before he could pay the sum agreed upon after months of haggling with his prospective son-in-law, was compelled to resort to the *banya*, or moneylender, which devout Brahman graciously lent him the money for the usually high consideration. In return, this most desirable husband was secured, but the whole lifetime of Harbheji's self-sacrificing father, and most of the lifetime of his eldest son, will run their days before the debt, *plus* the usurious compound interest, is finally paid, if, indeed, it ever will be.

Knowing all these things, conscious of the tremendous honour her husband has paid her by partnering someone of a somewhat lower plane of existence, Harbheji has a heavy heart when she thinks of the terrible things that will be said if, in Western parlance, she "lets down" her mate. Probably, it is beyond her mental abilities to realize that the so-called "favour" that her husband has bestowed upon her by marrying

her, at a top price, is, in fact, merely the operation of a craftily-organized and purely commercial system. It would tax her reasoning powers to probe too closely into the long-recognized practice, ordained by the money-making Brahmans, that a man should usually take a wife, not from a totally different caste (for that would be an unthinkable thing in Hinduism) but from a lower division of his own caste, thereby bringing a welcome and continuous flow of rupees into the coffers of the devout.

The scheme works in this way: When prospective sons-in-law of a higher status come into the marriage market, it is only natural that the would-be fathers-in-law, seeking superior mates for daughters who *must* be married, or everlastingly disgraced, should have to pay a pretty salty fee.

How can the cash be found except by patronizing the moneylender, who is also the Brahman, who is also the man in control of this marriage system and, incidentally, of all the other sound revenue-producing practices with which Hinduism teems? Again, by the constant transfer of girls from a lower to a higher sub-section, an excess of women over men in the more elevated divisions must result. This, in its turn, produces an artificial reduction in the ratio of men to women in the higher "septs", a fact which leads to a steady advance in the price which can be asked for suitable youths when fathers in the lower sections come match-making for their daughters.

See how beautifully everything dovetails into the pocket of the Brahman! Compared with this superman of Indian society, the shrewdest manipulator of

the Chicago wheat-pool, priding himself on the adroit uses of economic law, is a slow-wit at a kindergarten.

Of this, however, Harbheji knows nothing. Her husband, to her, represents something near the godhead itself. For him, she will again go through travail. For him, she will risk the moral disaster of once more being stigmatized as son-less. Her husband is a lord and master, the very Essence of Superiority. How can she understand that he is merely one of the pawns for the profits of the Brahmans? What can she grasp of the intricate mathematics and economics surrounding the Oriental conception of the law of supply and demand? Such subtleties are not for children who should be playing with their dolls instead of awaiting the arrival of the midwife—the filthy, besotted slattern who shall presently tear at her young body so that the law may be fulfilled for the safety of the husband and the profit of the priests.

So, around Harbheji the clouds gather. She thinks, as little wives do, of her wedding which gave her the most wonderful day of her life. Probably, it is the only happy memory now left to her. Until that fateful morning came, she and her husband were absolute strangers to one another.

Harbheji's mind wanders back to her first glimpse of her life-partner. Like all Hindu maidens, she had been taught to have the deepest respect for boys and men, and she was thrilled at the sight of her prospective husband. Blinded by the typical Indian blend of young romance and old tradition, she thought he was magnificent, perfect, although, to Western eyes, with their wider outlook, he would have appeared to be merely

A TYPICAL INDIAN GIRL, ONE OF THE MILLIONS WHO ARE MARRIED, AND SOMETIMES WIDOWED, BEFORE THEY ARE TWELVE.

what he was—a rather weedy potential *babu*, self-important but harmless.

The girl recollects how she gazed upon him with admiration. Through him, her worth-while destiny in life was to be fulfilled—her destiny of wifehood and motherhood, dedicated (and this was a still more splendid thing about it) to a husband of higher social status than herself.

Further, she had to bear in mind, on that radiant morning, that her wedding—the most ambitious dream in every Indian girl's life—had been delayed to a rather unusual, if not dangerous, extent. She was actually a little over eleven when the great event befell her. That, you know, was rather old, according to the standards of her community. She was "getting on", as Europeans would say. Why! in her own comparatively small circle of acquaintances, there were plenty of girls who had achieved the dignity of marriage by the time they were ten, or nine, or even eight!

In her town, where there had ever been a big surplus of youths and men (a surplus common to many districts of India) she had heard it openly said, among members of her caste, that a girl of eleven was positively on the *elderly* side for nuptials!

Still, the gods, on the whole, had been kind to her. They had provided ample compensation in the fact that, at long last, the ruler of her life had come from exclusive people who, in the ordinary way, if the rupees had not talked and if the moneylender had not listened favourably to the proposal for ruining her father, would have felt themselves unable to speak to poor Harbheji and her family.

As the panorama of her short but crowded life passes before her, the child's thoughts always go back to that marvellous marriage day. How vividly the rites themselves, and all the stages leading up to them, stand out! An astrologer, charging a suitable fee (he was a Brahman), had first provided a horoscope and fixed an auspicious date, accurate to the very hour and minute, for the ceremony. At about the same time, some of the priests, for an adequate consideration (naturally, they also were Brahmans), had learnedly consulted certain venerated writings and had declared the marriage to be desirable.

Digressing for a moment, this reminds me of the profitable subtleties practised by a servant who was in my employ in the East. Telling me he was going to be married—incidentally, the prospective bride was his third—he asked for six days' leave. This was not unreasonable, as the scene of the intended wedding was nearly a thousand miles away in an up-country village. The man was a good servant, so I granted his request, expressed my good wishes, advanced him his travelling expenses (faithfully repaid later) and, foolishly perhaps, made him a moderate present of money. He went off, beaming. Exactly six days later, he was back.

"Well," I asked him, "and how did the wedding go?"

In expressive Urdu, with a wealth of gestures indicative of heartbreak, he regretted that there had been no marriage.

"Why not?" I inquired, reminding him that, at any rate, he had been away for the whole of the stipulated time, on full wages.

"Alas! Sahib," he replied, "when I reached the village it was found that the astrologers had made a mistake in my bride's horoscope. Thus it happened that the date and hour they had first chosen for the ceremony was, in truth, the very worst that could have been selected! Myself and my family were prostrated with grief, and I suffered so great a disappointment that I became sick with a fever, having to spend your kind gift on special medicines. Thus, I could not return to your service before to-day."

So far as I know, this man is still unmarried, the astrologers continuing to thwart his happiness. I have since learned, however, that identical misfortunes have befallen other servants and have always been encountered during the enjoyment of special leave on full pay, *plus* a little present. This elaborate Oriental improvement upon the ever-popular funeral of the English office-boy's grandmother, may, in time, become quite a vogue.

But, in the case of Harbheji, the little Hindu child-wife, there was no mistake in the casting of the wedding horoscope. I fancy I can still see her, pensive, wistful, feminine, a happy gleam occasionally darting into her eyes, as her mind leaps back to the day of days, to the morning when, Jupiter and Venus being in conjunction with the sun, she and her future lord linked their lives. And this is the picture that comes to her:

She enters again, in memory, the house of the ceremony. There, many friends and relatives are assembled. All are barefooted. The guests, who begin to gather many hours before the marriage, wear their finest and brightest clothes. The room is a blaze

of gorgeously-hued *saris* and red and gold-laced turbans.

In the centre of the company, the sacred sacrificial fire is set, ready to glow vigorously with the bark and branches of the highly-revered *peepul* tree. Brahman priests, in charge of the rites, naturally take a prominent place.

Harbheji and the bridegroom enter separately. They, too, are barefooted. They wear their very best raiment (how radiant are the child's eyes as she recalls this!) and on each brow is the caste-mark (*tilak*), vividly outlined with blood-red powder.

The girl and the youth are seated near the ceremonial fire. They are side by side, but between them is a small curtain so that, as is the Hindu custom, they cannot see one another's face.

The great moment—the most vital of Harbheji's life—is now near. The priests, meanwhile, have begun the chanting of Vedic hymns which will continue for two hours or more. Astrologers consult the water-clock, an instrument somewhat after the style of Boetius, and give a sign that the exact minute indicated by the horoscope has nearly arrived.

Then the bride and bridegroom rise, one on either side of the curtain. They stand, listening to the hymns, until another signal shows that the auspicious moment (*Muhoorta Kale*) has come. Instantly, the screen is whisked aloft, free from the line of vision, and the girl and the youth gaze into each other's eyes. This is the point at which, according to the strict tradition, the bride is supposed to make the formal acquaintance of the bridegroom.

Standing thus, in sight of the still-chanting assembly, they follow the pretty custom of garlanding one another. They join their right hands, while, around their necks, are seen circlets of bright cotton threads symbolical of the marriage tie. At this stage, the girl and youth are officially introduced to the company as the prospective bride and bridegroom.

The sacred fire is now set glowing. Around it sit the young couple, the priests, members of the families, their nearer relatives and their most intimate friends. The bride is offered to the bridegroom by the girl's father. He uses a Sanskrit formula which can be translated as :

> "I offer you Harbheji, for the god of love, for wealth, and for the blessing of procreation."

When the bridegroom has accepted this offer, a very long thread of cotton, dyed yellow by soaking in turmeric, makes its appearance. The little girl and her not-much-bigger companion wind this around their bodies, taking apparently endless turns until both are entwined in it and the great strand is exhausted. In this way do they signify that they are to be for ever joined together as man and wife.

Next, with gyrations apparently just as endless, the cotton is unwound and is cut into two parts. These are twisted into bangles, known as *kankan*, and are placed on the wrists of the couple.

And now comes the vital and indissoluble phase of the ceremony—the observances that constitute the strictly legal side of the marriage. Together, the bride and bridegroom take seven steps, never more and

never less, around the sacrificial fire. Amid the voicing of Vedic *mantras* (incantations), offerings are made to the flames whose leaping tongues are hailed as witnesses of the nuptial vows. Without the *Saptapati*, as this rite is named, no Hindu wedding would be regarded as complete.

Next, the marriage vows are enunciated by a priest and by the youth and girl themselves.

Up to this point, everything has been romantic and poetic. Living that magic day over again, Harbheji knows that it all appeared very wonderful to her. But, now, she remembers, with a stabbing pang of dread and anxiety, the words which were employed in those marriage vows, and especially the solemn charge addressed to her by her husband in the presence of the priest immediately after the seven steps. As is laid down in the sacred code, he had said to her :

> "Bride ! give your heart to my work. Make your mind agreeable to mine. May the god Brahaspati make you pleasing to me !"

Then, her response having been made—a response in which she declared her hope to bless him with children—she had received his gift of a necklace, the benedictions of the priests, and presents from parents and relatives.

After this, Harbheji and her young lord had gone outside the house and, as is the Hindu way, had called upon the sun, the moon, and the Polar Star to witness their wedded state.

Even now, three years later, when she reflects upon

it all, the egotism of her husband's vow is not fully apparent to her. It does not occur to her that it emphasized the importance and desires of the youth, that it presumed the place of the woman in marriage to be solely that of carrying out her husband's purpose and affording him pleasure. No! her mind, the product of a country where the "superiority complex" of the male has reigned for centuries, does not look upon it in that way. Rather, it is the earnest nature of her wifely mission which now concerns her.

So, behold our little Harbheji, desperate and nerve-racked, as, three years after that great occasion, the nuptial charge of her husband beats its way through her brain. Vanished now are the joyful and proud memories of her wedding-day. They are overcome in the surge of her man's behest, his command uttered in the presence of the sacred fire, and endorsed by the witness of the sun, moon and stars:

> "Give your heart to *my* work! Make your mind agreeable to *mine*! May the god Brahaspati make you pleasing to *me*!"

"Pleasing!" And, as yet, she has given him no son, when a son is the first and most desperate need!

Poor, borne-down, overwrought, shrinking Harbheji! How can one expect a mere little child to be a wife, a mother, and a pivot of a man's salvation all at the same time?

Will she be "pleasing" to him when, in a few days, she adventures again into the Valley of the Shadow? Will she give him his soul's desire when the fiendish

midwife, the filthy "untouchable" in her reeking rags, a creature looking upon motherhood, the noblest crown of life, as the thing that is most foul, finally comes to torture her?

Meanwhile, the women of her circle are in readiness either to bring her new-born son—not, mark you, the torn, trembling mother—with ecstasies of praise to the notice of the gods, or to cast her, and another daughter, with dire curses, down to the dungeons of Shame.

Which shall it be? That is the agony of Harbheji—agony as great as the travail to come. Is fine achievement to enrapture her, or is failure to crush her? Which? . . . Which? Horrors of horrors if she should hear, when the physical pain has given place to an intenser heartache, the tragic and tormenting cry of the thwarted husband: "*Give me a son!*"

Or, perhaps, the midwife, more fuddled and enraged than usual, blinder and dirtier than before, more brutal and venomous than she was last time, will end the anxieties of this little girl for ever. . . .

* * * * *

Every year, in India, many hundreds of thousands of viciously misused little girls, a big percentage of them married to grown and ungentle men, are slain (there is no other word for it) by the brutalities adopted at childbirth. Possibly, their annual number mounts to a million or so. I can find no exact figure in any of the records which I have consulted. Indeed, it is my experience that such statistics as occasionally come from Indian sources dealing with this point are characterized both by confusion and reticence.

The Simon Report, however, states that "maternal mortality in India stands at a very high figure," and proceeds to point out that, in regard to infant mortality, the ratio of deaths, under one year, per thousand births is *more than two-and-a-half times the corresponding figure for England and Wales*. The total certainly runs into millions. The Report also mentions the "untrained midwives who follow their hereditary profession without any knowledge of the principles of aseptic treatment." That this sums up the truth rather mildly will be seen from statements made elsewhere in this book, dealing further with the midwives' "profession".

* * * * *

Meanwhile, come with me again to what was formerly the home of Harbheji, the childwife, who suffered all things until, two years before the time I wrote this book, a toddy-soaked member of the midwives' "hereditary profession" sent her and her third baby, another daughter, to the paradise where, perchance, she may at last really play like the little girls on earth who do not happen to be married to Hindus.

As for the petty *babu*, her former lord and master, he is naturally married again, this time to a mite of twelve. As in the case of the alliance with Harbheji, the husband's parent again extracted a most satisfactory price from the new father-in-law who, in his turn, had recourse to the same Brahman moneylender who, again in *his* turn, reluctantly agreed, for a consideration, to ruin this further client. Thus did the wheel, once more, come full circle, truly a vicious circle to nearly

everybody except the Brahman moneylender, the Brahman astrologers and the Brahman priests who profited by it.

But stay! There was another who experienced a little monetary gain on this occasion, which befell only a few months after Harbheji's death. I refer to no less a person than the bereaved widower himself. Becoming worldly-wise in his twentieth year, he brought off an astute stroke of business by pocketing a pleasant side-commission on his own price as a mate for his new and tender childbride! Also, it should be noted that, in the interim, the shares of this limp potential lord and master had been quoted at a slight advance in the marriage stock-lists. So, altogether, it was a very satisfactory deal. It is only rarely that he smiles, but he invariably does so when he thinks of this.

The *babu* is now earning one shilling and sixpence a week more. Also, he has both a new embroidered cap and an infant son. So his soul and his purse have gained added merit.

At that, I shall leave him. I shall leave him with the question whether any man—white, brown, yellow, or black—is truly worthy of the devotion and heroism of so noble a little girl as Harbheji, type of a million other lovely souls, whose story this is.

CHAPTER V

"THOU ART A WIDOW, AND ACCURSED!"

DRAGGING her lacerated and incredibly dirty feet through the hot dust, a peculiar figure shuffles past the shop-fronts of the squalid bazaar. At least she might seem peculiar in Western eyes.

She is a Hindu widow. Therefore, she is a thing accursed.

India holds no indignities deep enough for her. No shame is too black to heap upon her; no disgrace is too lasting, no crucifix too cruel.

I cannot even guess at her age. Dirt, the lines of care, the verminous rags huddled around her, and the dark cloud of despair which encompasses her, would baffle any estimate. She might be twenty-five, or she might be fifty-five. I should not be surprised even if I were assured that she is eighteen. The one certain thing about her is that she is a widow.

That is her only crime—her widowhood.

Krishni (let that name stand for her) had a husband who died from one of the endemic diseases which every now and again ravage India, carrying millions away.

In her home-town, the bodies of many thousands of men were carried to the burning-ghats when the fever came. But such a plague, in the Hindu code, is

no excuse for widowhood, and Krishni must pay the penalty to the end of her days.

Study her more closely as she comes shuffling along. Never, surely, did one of God's creatures present so pathetic an appearance. The hair of her head is shaven closer than that of an old-time English convict. Were it not for a tiny bristly patch here and there, you would think she was bald.

Her eyes are bloodshot, and the rims are red and swollen, as with much weeping. Her skin, where it chances to be uncovered by grime, is seared by the furrows of suffering. Her cheeks are pitted. Her hands are coarse, and their skin is broken by rough toil. The scraggy neck, the flat chest, the bent shoulders, the sore-infested ankles, tormented by the flies from the street garbage, all swell the tale of tragedy.

She clutches over her shrunken bosom the sorry bits of verminous rags which pass for clothes. Her head is down-bent. She speaks to no-one, and no-one speaks to her unless to voice a resonant curse. She does not even look at any of her compatriots in the thronged bazaar, and they have no gaze to spare for her, except an occasional glance of malevolence and scorn. For she is a widow.

Another woman, one of lower caste than Krishni, appears from a side-turning of the bazaar and walks towards the ragged creature, without at first seeing her. Suddenly, by chance, the eyes of the two meet. She of the lower caste gives a horrified shriek, utters a quick incantation, and flees from view by darting into a burrow-like passage. The poor tattered wayfarer sighs and passes on. For many months she has been

accustomed to such experiences, and they have hardened her.

The frightened woman who fled at the mere sight of her is an expectant mother, and it is enjoined upon her that, if she values her own soul, as well as that of her unborn child, she must, at all costs, avoid contact with so contemptible a person as a widow. Should she accidentally meet one, then she may, if she knows the formula, recite an appropriate counter-spell against calamity, and hurriedly depart from the sight of the outcaste. For a widow, such as Krishni, is presumed to possess the "evil eye" in a very special degree. It is bad for anybody to be looked at by such a person, but, if one who is soon to bear a child should happen to come into actual physical touch with a person accursed enough to have lost her husband—well, the result would be catastrophic. It would be said that the infant had been thereby deprived of a real chance in life, even before he had seen the light!

Such things are only a few phases of the Calvary of Krishni, the widow. There are many more—so many that her life for years has been one long round of sorrows, indignities and hardships. It will continue thus until her death, for there is no escape from the widow's lot. She may have been, and probably was, an ideal wife and mother, but that does not matter now. She may have given the best years of her life to the untiring service of her husband. They count for nothing to-day. She may have been beautiful, but, because her husband has died before her, she must disfigure herself by shaving, branding herself thereby as a being upon whom a curse is laid, and she must exchange her

pretty clothes for the lice-infested tatters of the dust-heap.

Good food, and sufficient of it, may have been enjoyed by her during her wifehood. But that, too, is all changed. If, like many widows, she remains in the house of the mother-in-law, she must now eat only once in each day, and her meal, which is taken alone, so that she may not contaminate the rest of the household, then consists of the worst scraps and "leavings" set aside for her, and flung at her as one would cast the smallest mouldiest bone at the worst and weediest mongrel.

Day by day she becomes more and more emaciated. Also, since she is assigned the filthiest and most malodorous tasks in a blazing country where sanitation is comparatively unknown, she grows dirtier and dirtier.

The one person who will still honour her is her son, should she be fortunate enough to have borne one.

Need one wonder if, as her body is crucified more and more, her soul becomes dark and bitter ? It would, indeed, be a noble nature that could withstand the assault when even little children are encouraged to practise imprecations upon her, and to treat her as a butt for all that is vile.

Krishni, and widows like her, are no uncommon figures of Indian life. Rather, they are appallingly plentiful, for the Calvary of Krishni is endured to-day by *at least twenty-seven million women*. To all of them their lives are a hell, varied perhaps in degree and circumstances, but still a hell.

Twenty-seven million women on the Cross ! Twenty-seven million women suffering a crucifixion in which is concentrated all the inhumanity and devilry that wait in attendance upon the fanaticism of the East. Twenty-seven millions ! What would one think if considerably more than half the entire population of Great Britain were suddenly turned into social lepers, people whom one would be expected—nay, commanded—to curse, to starve, to demean and to ill-treat in every possible way ? Yet, it is no more than the stark truth to say that what I have written exactly describes the fate of that vast army of broken souls.

All this is done in the name of organized "religion". Let there be no mistake about that. The more advanced and cultured Hindus (and it must be gratefully acknowledged that their number is steadily growing) may strenuously declare that, strictly speaking, a Hindu widow, especially a virgin widow, may remarry, and that some of them, greatly daring, actually do so. These enlightened controversialists may point out that there is nothing in the Code of *Manu*, upon which so much Hindu custom is based, which expressly forbids such a marriage. They may—and they do—say all that, and more, for, in conducting a daily newspaper in India, I have ploughed my way through veritable mountains of such arguments (incidentally, a Hindu leader's letter to an Editor is rarely less than six closely written foolscap sheets), but the truth remains that the inborn traditions, the deep-rooted beliefs, and the bitter prejudices of the ordinary people, all carefully nurtured by the priesthood, falsify the sophists on every hand.

So far as at least ninety per cent. of India's people,

living in five hundred thousand villages, are concerned, academic discussions have no bearing upon their lives. Such things are reserved for the argumentative ten per cent., largely Brahmans dwelling in the biggest towns and having the biggest axes to grind. The masses know only the *facts* of their daily existence, the traditions and codes which have always been as they are, the things which, if the gods and the priests are to be served as hitherto, will ever be unchanged.

So it comes about that Krishni and twenty-seven million others are doomed to an existence rather worse than that of a starved cur among thugs. It is in the direct interests of the Brahman caste (and, therefore, of the priesthood recruited wholly from that caste) that this state of affairs should not be altered.

Women, as pointed out elsewhere in this book, die like flies in India. Their shocking mortality rate largely accounts for the fact that the country contains about ten million more males than females. Primarily arising from the sex-obsessions which I have already described, it is enjoined upon men, youths, and even mere boys, that they should mate with young and virgin girls. Many observers have placed it on record that this marked preference for girl-children of very tender age is a disturbing and discreditable feature of Hindu life. Still, the fact must be faced. He who would shut his eyes to it is a fool.

Now, let us suppose that, instead of following that beastly inclination, men and youths become married to a big proportion of the vast number of widows. Mark the economic effect of such a course. Firstly, on account of the more rapid absorption of the unmarried males,

A VAST CROWD OF DEVOTEES BATHING IN THE SACRED WATERS DURING AN INDIAN FESTIVAL

there would be, in time, a shortage of the eligible boys for whom, under the present system, nice fat fees can be obtained when they desire to wed little girls. Rupees would thus flow in a less steady stream towards the pockets of interested parties and officials, not excluding the Brahmans.

Secondly, the proportion of young unmarried girls would inevitably tend to become bigger. Even allowing for the fact that, to a Hindu, the girls would still be more desirable as mates than widows, it is certain that an army of twenty-seven millions, all the members of which must yearn to escape from their widowed condition, would provide some formidable competition. Further, it should be borne in mind that, according to the Indian census of 1921, quoted by the Simon Report, there were then one hundred thousand widows *under the age of ten*! I should be much surprised if there has been any appreciable reduction of this number during the intervening years. It will, therefore, be seen that even the widows themselves contain a percentage of girls likely to appeal to potential husbands. Many of these child-widows, too, had never consummated their marriages. I remember, in this regard, a conversation I had with a prominent Hindu reformer who admitted to me that he would strongly support the remarriage of widows *who were virgins*.

It is clear, then, that any such movement would increase the total of still-unmated young girls, resulting in a decline in the price of marriage-market shares. This would not be "good business" from the point of view of the exploiters of the present system which artificially stimulates the preference for child-wives and,

at the same time, makes them just numerically rare enough to be all the more desirable.

There is another compelling reason why Krishni and her sisters must be for ever shut out from even the humblest pleasures of life, and that is religious superstition. A widow, according to the views of Hindus in the mass, has merited her condition through her sin in this or in a previous life. For that offence, her lord and master, the potential father of sons to glorify him and the gods, was taken from her. Therefore, she is to be cast into the darkness of hatred and contempt for all the rest of her days.

That, perhaps, is not the law laid down in black and white by the Vedic scriptures, but it certainly *is* the law practised by about one hundred and sixty-three millions of Hindus in British India alone, or by about two hundred and sixteen millions, if the Indian States are included. Think of the whole population of Britain and multiply it by five, and you have a conception of the vast numbers committed, in this twentieth century, to a custom more barbaric, more hedged around with demoniacal cruelty, than anything known in England when the Ancient Britons bedaubed themselves with woad.

I have heard some subtle arguments by Indians in attempts to defend this deliberate mass-torture. Not a few of the reasons advanced strike curiously on the ears of a white man. Here, for instance, is a talk, as nearly as I can record it, which I had with a Hindu official, an expert on indigenous medicines, regarding this subject.

"You see," he said, "women, as even you English

know, are often very difficult to manage. And frequently they are unhappy or, perhaps, jealous, in their married life. It sometimes happens that they are so enraged with their husbands, imagining that they are being treated cruelly or unfairly, that they might readily resort to poison, and thus rid themselves of the so-called tyrants. But, when they know that, if they do this, they will be treated in the way we always treat widows and those of the Evil Eye, they are afraid to take such steps, lest their lives become still more miserable!"

"That is surely a rather left-handed compliment to the Hindu husband," I suggested; "and, in any case, I cannot see why the fact that a woman occasionally has a tyrannical partner—a purely private circumstance which, after all, concerns only her household—should condemn millions of other women to lifelong shame."

The Hindu shrugged his shoulders and scissored his hands to and fro, the Oriental equivalent for the "wash out" of the Morse flag code.

"Ah!" he responded, "you do not quite appreciate the different conditions in the East. Murder would be so terribly easy if the least opportunity in that direction were given to women. You have only to consider, for instance, the fact that Hindus are invariably cremated, not buried like Christians and Mahommedans. Also, in a hot country, the funeral is very soon—within a few hours of death. Poison could be used without leaving a trace, and I know that, in cases of extreme exasperation, it has been so used, the wife preferring the disgrace of widowhood to continued cohabitation with the husband."

"Very well," I said; "but can even that argument

justify the terrible sufferings of a widow whose husband has died naturally, or, say, as the result of a cholera epidemic ?"

"A good point," he admitted, "but is it not true of many laws that people must be called upon to suffer hardships for the good of men in general ?"

"Just and humane laws," I retorted, somewhat hotly, "would never send masses of women to a living death merely to save the skin of a man who can be so cruel to his wife that he fears she might poison him. Are the interests of self-admitted brutes alone to be considered and the welfare of millions of women flung, like the women themselves, on the scrap-heap ? Are not their interests to be studied in the slightest degree ? Is it only the man who matters ?"

My Hindu acquaintance did not like this, though, as a person of charming manners, he was too polite to show it. So he returned to his original point of attack.

"But just imagine the wave of crime we should get in India !" he exclaimed. "You English are always reminding us of the importance of preserving law and order and safeguarding the sanctity of human life. Well, what would happen if no one raised objections to the remarriage of any widow ?"

"All right ! What *would* happen ?" I inquired.

He leant forward in his earnestness until his eyes looked straight into mine. In the light of the radiant moon, now soaring amid a myriad stars (for this conversation took place on a veranda of a bungalow one burning night), his face glowed as he replied with deep conviction :

"There would be an epidemic of murders. Believe me, our women, though they may appear quieter and more retiring than the English *memsahibs*, have feelings as deep, jealousies as fierce, loves as intense, and hatreds as lasting as any wives in the whole world!"

Knowing something of Asia and of human nature, I agreed.

"Then," he went on, "emotions and passions that have been restrained for years would leap out. Everywhere, there would be murder, at first blazing up like a flame, and then gradually dying down. Ardent young girls, perhaps married to old and unpleasant men, would take their revenge, in a frenzy of sudden freedom, and go to their waiting lovers. For half a generation or more, these crimes would shock us.

"Think!" he added, warming to his subject, "how simple and easy it would be. No need for mixing small doses of ground glass with food, to lacerate the bowels and bring slow death. That method is not used in the East nearly so much as novelists and Europeans imagine. No! Just a little aconite, or the right amount of *gloriosa superba*, or, now and then, a few specks of arsenic which, as you know, is so largely used by Indians as an aphrodisiac that it would never be suspected, and——pouff!—the unwanted husband is soon no more. Within a day, or perhaps less, he has gone to the burning-ghat. His ashes are in the river. His widow is in another man's arms. Under the present system, it is a wise policy for a wife to do all in her power to keep her partner alive, for who would desire to be among the pariahs? But, remove that deterring influence, and what then? . . ."

He paused. His eyes again glowed in the moon-brilliance.

"I tell you," he resumed, "that the poison-cup of India would never be empty !"

Dramatic, perhaps, but not completely convincing. In such a way did the now-remote philosophers argue that *suttee*, the self-immolation of widows on their husbands' funeral pyres, tended to increase the amities and security of married life, since it was obvious that a wife who was virtually compelled to be cremated simultaneously with her partner would do everything in her power to keep him alive.

As is well-known, *suttee*, for many years, has been declared illegal in India, but I much doubt whether the practice has entirely ceased. There is still a marked veneration for the deep love which, in a storm of frenzied grief, impels a widow to fling herself into the flames as they consume her husband's corpse—the sacrificial flames which, on her wedding-day, symbolized the not unbeautiful belief that every marriage is a union for eternity.

Reports purporting to describe instances of this practice still drift occasionally into newspaper offices in India. I have seen a few of these statements. They were somewhat vague, and such "evidence" as existed was mostly second, or even third, hand. But some accounts have been rather circumstantial. On the principle that there is no smoke without fire, and guided by knowledge of the amazing lengths to which religious frenzy can still go in India, I am inclined to believe that *suttee* still occurs, but very rarely and secretly, though I know of no reported instance of it, within recent years,

which could be completely and independently confirmed.

Even though immolation is such a barbaric procedure, every impartial mind will admit that the æsthetic conceptions associated with it—the superb austerity, the deep idealism, and the overwhelming sacrifices of eternal love—are lofty and magnificent.

Many intellectual Hindus have sought to convince me that, on those higher grounds, they are justified in opposing the remating of women who have entered into marriage as an everlasting sacrament.

In an absolutely perfect world, such noble austerity might be workable, but the blunt truth is that, in a vast continent containing millions, with all the faults, as well as many of the virtues, of ordinary human nature, such an abstract principle is bound to become debased. Its symbolism, fine as it is, has thus become nothing but savagery and untold suffering. A wonderful idea has been turned to devilry.

Thus, my mind goes back to the widow Krishni and her Calvary, and to the wistful, twisted little children, widowed almost in infancy, poor, tattered, deformed, shaven and famished mites, living on garbage; frail atoms of human driftwood ranking below the bazaar beggars; disease-ridden, shrivelled souls, fighting like tigresses for a few paltry coins.

You people of England! imagine a widow in noisome rags that might have come from a charnel-heap; a widow so seared and deep-bitten with disease that you scarcely know whether or not she is human; a widow so emaciated that you cannot possibly tell how she keeps the breath of life within her; a widow

who, though the agonies of hell are bearing her down, *is not yet eight years old*! There are whole battalions of such widows in India.

When next you look lovingly and proudly at your dainty little daughters of that age, playing with their hoops and dolls' perambulators, think of the hundreds of thousands of other children, no older than yours, but battered and broken by a shameful curse of man's making, crucified by order of the priests, clawing among the filth for a coin to hold body and soul together in an existence that even Dante never pictured.

What value will you then attach to the contention of some Indians, such as the one I have quoted, that these inhumanities of enforced widowhood should continue? What, after all, is the real basis of their case? It is simply a plea that these iniquities should endure so that the very fear of them may protect from vengeance, in a country where the blood runs hot and passion is high, the gross bodies and viler souls of evil old men who brutally treat their young wives as nothing but concubines. Such beasts may amount to a great number in the aggregate, no doubt, but, compared with the vast mass of ordinarily faithful Hindu husbands, they are a mere handful.

A thoroughly civilized people could never agree that the safety of such vicious wretches can be justly balanced in the scale against the cold and calculated martyrdom of *one-sixth of India's womanhood*, for that is approximately the proportion of widows to the whole female population!

One girl or woman out of every six, for no crime whatsoever, is denied all the usual amenities of life.

The hand of every man, and of every member of her own sex not a widow, is against her.

She must not share in any festivities or celebrations. Great occasions in the temples are not for her, and she cannot join in worship as others do. She goes barefooted, and often bareheaded.

She is forbidden to love, or speak to children, or have anything to do with them. As she is, in so many cases, nothing but a child herself, this is a particularly diabolical hardship. There are countless buildings in which she must not set her foot, lest she defile them.

So she drags her weary way through life, ostracized, derided, underfed and slave-driven. If she is comparatively fortunate, she may be allowed to remain in the house of her mother-in-law after the husband's death, but she will soon realize that, unless she has had a son, she is now of no more account than the lowest animal.

A dog, in fact, has a much more clearly defined status in an Indian home than she has. I have seen widows of less than twenty engaged, hour after hour, in compulsory labours (they need not be described here) which were so revolting, especially in the fiercely hot weather, that an experienced London sewerman would have retched if he had tackled them for ten minutes.

From all this degradation, there is, apart from death, one obvious avenue of escape, and it is small wonder that the widow often follows it. It is the way of prostitution. The pursuit of that trade is, to some extent, a set-off against the indignities of widowhood, for

prostitution in the East is at least looked upon as an honourable profession, and those who practise it are not put into the same low category as is the case in Britain and in some other countries. Indeed, as a "calling", it ranks comparatively high.

Hence, when an unfortunate widow turns to this way of partial escape from her agonies, she is, at any rate, doing something which is not deemed to be, in itself, a disgraceful pursuit, such as all the other occupations to which her hand would otherwise be set. True, she is a widow still, and, as such, she is ranked among the lower order of prostitutes; but she is, at least, now doing something which is definitely regarded as serviceable, instead of being simply demeaning.

There can be little doubt that compulsory widowhood is an openly recognized channel along which flows a regular stream of recruits for the brothel-quarters of the bazaars. In this steady supply may be seen an alarming proportion of girls in their 'teens, ranging downwards even to mites of eight. It is pitiable to reflect that such widows, having been reared from the earliest age in an atmosphere which, to say the least of it, is frank in sex matters, make admirable recruits from the bazaars' point of view.

If widows could remarry at will, there would almost certainly be a considerable interruption in the source of supply, and the conditions of life in a country with marked sensual inclinations would be somewhat radically altered. Can this consideration, one wonders, be a further reason for the continuance of a system of widowhood that becomes more rotten the more one looks into it?

These poor creatures are the veriest pawns of Fate. They are untutored and absolutely illiterate. They have no knowledge except that which they have gained from soul-destroying surroundings and occupations. Thrust among brutality and filth, what can they learn, unless it be that age-old craft—the pathetic animal instinct to exploit whatever physical attractions they may possess ?

Lack of education lies at the root of this. It is the rarest thing for a girl in India to receive any tuition. There are whole Provinces in which not four in every hundred ever enter a school. An area in which the proportion of girls at school is as high as twenty in a hundred preens itself as being exceptionally advanced !

A hard-working Government official, after twenty years of toil in India, said to me :

"It makes my heart bleed. What can we hope for if all these mothers of the India of to-morrow can neither read nor write and are not even encouraged to think ? What can the future hold, of any real value, when ninety-six girls in every hundred have no choice except to believe everything that they are told ? And what, in fact, *are* they told ? Nothing ! except that their proper function in life is to toil for a man and to make themselves pleasing to him."

Gratefully it must be acknowledged that many noble women, Indian and European, are making heroic efforts to bring about improvements in the conditions of the womanhood of our Eastern Dependency. The Simon Report (Vol. 1, page 53) points unerringly to the crux of the matter when it says : "The women's movement in India holds the key of progress, and the results it may achieve are incalculably great. *It is not*

too much to say that India cannot reach the position to which it aspires in the world until its women play their due part as educated citizens." (The italics are mine.)

Obstructed by the ignorance and the rank superstition prevailing among the people whom they seek to uplift, reformers must find their work almost a labour of Sisyphus. Many generations will pass before the massive boulders of tradition cease to roll back upon the toilers.

Excellent as some of the aims are, magnificent as is the gesture of the Sarda Act (see Chapter II), I cannot help thinking that much of this labour of love will make a pathetically slow impression upon the *real* India, by which I mean the vast population of the interior, the teeming millions of villagers, forming nearly nine-tenths of the people. These, because they are untaught, and unled, and because of a "religious" influence largely unsympathetic towards any progress that might cut across their customs, must remain, for many weary years, in a moral wilderness.

Has that wilderness anything more ghastly to show than such a spectacle as a compulsory child-widow who first becomes a pariah by order of the priests and then a prostitute by desire of the people ?

* * * * *

Another picture comes to my mind. This time, it is not that of a widow, but of a Hindu wife. She is only about twelve, but she has the heart of a woman. She was made for sympathy and love, but tragedy is all that she has met in life.

To her, a daughter was born a little while ago. Ever since, she has been brutally ill-treated by her husband, an elderly fellow of low caste engaged in a menial occupation.

But there is someone who loves her—a fine handsome youth of her own faith who promises to do well in life. How the little girl with the soul for motherhood and the genius for affection adores him! And how he longs for her! But—she is faithful to her ageing brute of a partner, the wretch whose only wish is that she should give him a son before he kicks her into the open drain outside his house.

The life of this child is equally divided between caring for the baby girl whom her husband loathes and attending to the man's desires. She can never have love for him. How could that be expected? She had scarcely seen him before the wedding which, naturally, was arranged entirely by her father. She remains with him simply because it is her duty.

Often, in the depth of the night, when only the bark of the jackal is heard outside, and the moonbeams skip inquiringly through the wall-gap that serves as a window, she looks with loathing upon her hulk of a husband, lying in a doped sleep. For he has reached that state at which he takes drugs for his nightly frenzies and more drugs for his subsequent slumbers. . . .

And, meanwhile, there is a real lover for her in the world, in this town . . . in this very street. But still she stays with her bestial mate. She is a Hindu girl-wife, and she knows what is expected of her. It is the code, the law, the way of things.

Through the high-cut aperture in the wall, she can

see, spangling the deep blue night-sky, a tracery of stars—the stars by which, on her wedding-day, she swore to remain eternally true to the sot who has agonized her life. She looks at the jewelled firmament long and wistfully—the stars that witness the happy vows of lovers. . . .

Her baby wails. She picks up the child to nurse it . . . and, doing so, she turns away from the stars. . . .

What are her thoughts? Does she long for the release that would come with widowhood? Would that disgraced state, redeemed perhaps by an illicit relationship with her real lover, be preferable to this long-drawn-out torture? I shall never know. No mere man could hope to probe the heart of a girl in such circumstances. Let the genius of the Gujrati poet, Vallabh, speak for her in these striking lines, the prayer of yet another child-wife to the Goddess Mother, as quoted by Mr. Otto Rothfeld in his "Women of India", published in Bombay:

> Goddess mother, old is the husband thou has given me;
> Mother, accursed is this coming to life of mine. . . .
> A little child am I, and he a great lumbering aged man.
> My youth is like a blossom, and my husband is a shrivelled mummy.
> Mother, mine are just sixteen years, and he has seen his eighty. . . .
> Goddess mother, sportive am I, and would like to play, and I make my eyes twinkle,
> But, Mother, he, he says, "I'll beat you," and lifts his stick in his hand. . . .
> On the festival, all the girls are gaily dressed and merry,
> But my husband is tired and weak and ugly, and I bend my head with shame.

Mother, my hair is black, and his head is all white or grey.
My youth is at its blooming and already my life is wrecked. . . .
Why was I not strangled at birth? Why was I not poisoned? . . .
Yet, *if my husband die, it is my part to be true to death.* . . .
When I am born again, give me a husband that is young and strong!

CHAPTER VI

"IN THE NAME OF THE GODS!"

A HUNDRED and twenty-five degrees in the shade, and heaven knows how much in the sun! It is a sizzling noon-day, and the thermometer is still going up. What a stew-pot the plains of India can be in June! A great fan over the desk in my room churns up the hot air and directs it, in uncomfortable blasts, down my neck. The protruding end of a sheet of paper in the typewriter flutters maddeningly in the torrid eddies. Unweighted documents at my elbow are swirled on to the floor, but I am too grilled and sticky to pick them up.

The day is made for drowsiness, but there is work to be finished. The wheels of industry must be kept moving, even though the whole world become a Turkish bath. The Hindu *chaprassi* (messenger) is fast asleep in a shady corner of the veranda outside my door. His face is turned to the wall, and a lizard darts like forked lightning within an inch of his snoring mouth. An "untouchable" sweeper, careful to keep his distance from so high a personage as even a slumbering *chaprassi*, dozes in another corner. One of my dogs, a comical mongrel named Heinz, in honour of his numerous varieties, is searching for the spot on the drugget where, in his opinion, the fan will stir up the greatest draught. Presently, he locates it, and

lies down to sleep in his favourite attitude. That is to say, he turns over until he rests upon the whole length of his spinal column as if it were the keel of a ship. Then he stretches his legs widely apart and rears them grotesquely and erectly upwards after the manner of a table placed upside down. Opening his mouth and letting his tongue loll out, he makes dreamland tours in a land of fat rats and dewy grass.

Meanwhile, I plod on with a newspaper article, for printers await, and this is one of the few spheres of life in which the usual Oriental philosophy, "to-morrow will do", is of little avail. I am in the act of wiping away the plashes of perspiration which have dripped from my brow on to the last sheet when I hear the sound of astonishingly vigorous steps coming along the veranda, followed by a wholesome English "damn!" as the stepper nearly falls over the slumbering *chaprassi*, who, by this time, has moved to a shadier spot just outside the doorway.

A fine specimen of a British Police officer, smartly turned out in his khaki uniform, his face nearly as radiant as his gleaming Sam Browne, bursts into the room. He is a typical product of one of the great English public schools. He is the essence of alertness, efficiency, courage, and good humour. No one but a possessor of all those qualities could hope to tackle successfully the infinite responsibilities of a high post in the Indian Police.

"Come on!" he breezes, "come on! Cut that dope short! I'll bet it's about *Swaraj*, or Dominion Status, or the Simon Commission, or something like that, and—Lord!—don't we all get enough to read on those

subjects ? Come along for a few hours with me, and you'll see something that is really worth writing about."

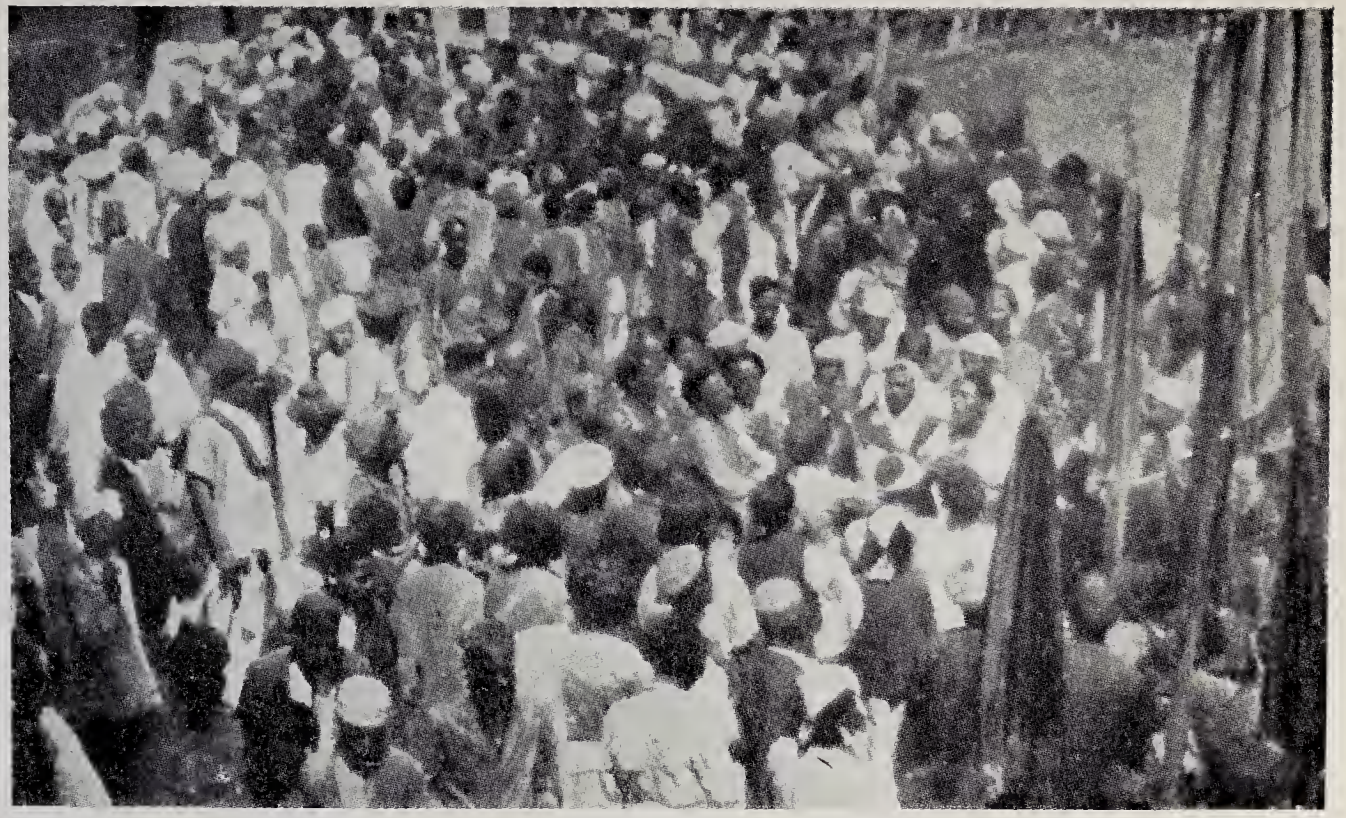
"Meaning the Moharram," I reply, for this is the chief day of the great Mahommedan festival, which glorifies for ever the martyrdom and death of Hasan and Hosain, grandsons of the Prophet, at the same time reminding Moslems of the prestige of the caliph Ali, father of those two heroes, cousin of the Prophet and husband of Fatima, Mahomet's daughter.

"Exactly," responds my friend. "It's a tremendous hoo-ha. Ought to impress you."

Leaving the much-protesting Heinz (he badly wants to come) in the charge of the now-awake pariah sweeper who, being spurned by lower men, has a deep well of affection towards higher animals, I accompany my friend to his car.

The policeman takes the wheel. "Can't spare a constable to act as driver to-day," he explains. "I have every available man on special duty at the Moharram. These are the occasions, as you know, on which anything may happen, and the police are all keyed-up and on tip-toe."

The sturdy car (an American product, I regret to say) chugs its way from the European Station. As we proceed, the crowd of people hurrying towards the bazaar-quarter becomes denser and denser until we are caught up in a sort of maelstrom, a swirling torrent of *tongas*, bullock-drawn vehicles (almost immovable rocks among the rapid eddies), saloons, limousines, pedal-cycles, motor-cycles, hand-barrow contraptions and even a low-built Victorian phaeton drawn by a



DEVOUT MAHOMMEDANS CARRYING THE "TAZIAS" (SHRINES) OF HASAN AND HOSAIN AT A MOHARRAM FESTIVAL IN THE MOUNTAINS. THIS RITE FOLLOWS THE TERRIBLE BREAST-SCOURGING CEREMONY DESCRIBED IN THIS BOOK.

high-in-the-world camel, giving an impression of something rather like a cross-talk act by the giant and the dwarf at the circus. Amid all this medley, vast throngs press along on foot. The air is charged with excitement, and, at any moment, there may be a blazing-up of tempers as hot as the temperature.

This is a city in which Hindus and Mahommedans are about evenly mixed. There is, further, a strong flavouring of Sikhs, while representatives of many other creeds also have their homes here. The town, moreover, has been, for many years, a notorious centre of communal disturbance, and it stands high in the running for a world-wide record in regard to the number of bombs and miniature arsenals unearthed from time to time by the ever-vigilant police.

So, who can wonder if people's nerves, particularly those of the officials, are on edge? Passions are apt to become unleashed during this festival which, having lasted for several days, is now about to come to a climax. The risk of a serious clash is surely obvious when a Mahommedan procession many miles long, like that which I am about to see, passes through districts where scores of thousands of Hindus reside. It needs only some comparatively tiny spark to start a tremendous conflagration. A clash with a body of Hindus proceeding to worship; the playing of music near a mosque; a misunderstanding over the slaughter of a sacrificial cow or goat by Mahommedans—a practice which always infuriates Hindus—and, in a flash, men spring at one another's throats and the streets are littered with dead and dying. This has happened so often that everybody knows of it. Yet, such is the lure of the Moharram,

that Mahommedans for miles around would rather omit to turn five times a day towards Mecca than miss this. Thus, knowing the risk, they troop in dense armies to pay homage to the Prophet's illustrious relatives and to do the other extraordinary things which I am to see.

My friend's car turns into one of the gateways in the ancient city wall. Behind us are the imposing thoroughfares of the European station. Before us are the packed narrow streets, the tortuous warrens, and grotesquely irregular buildings of the Indian quarter. There are giant houses and dwarf houses. There are structures that tilt backward alarmingly. Others are canted sideways, either to the left or the right, exhausting every angle known to geometry. There are those that lean forward drunkenly ; and there are, strange to say, even some erections that stand up straight and soberly. A "building-line" is apparently non-existent, for there is no attempt at alignment. So great is the contrast between the modern spaciousness on one side of the city wall and the old-world craziness on the other, that I am afraid no one could feel unimpressed by the transformation except a case-hardened Drury Lane scene-shifter.

From the shadow of a deep archway, a slick young constable, spick and span with bright red turban and khaki uniform, steps forward and smartly salutes my friend. He presents a brief report in Urdu, receives instructions, briskly retires two paces, and salutes again as we pass on. I notice that he is a Hindu. His duty at this Islamic festival must be very distasteful, but he carries it out efficiently and subordinates all personal

feelings to the interests of the Service in which he is engaged. The Indian Police, with their magnificent record of unswerving discipline, even in exceptionally provocative circumstances, are nearly all like that.

Now the streets become even narrower, and further progress is impossible in the car; so we leave it under the watchful eye of another constable and continue on foot, squeezing through a crowd more densely packed than any I have yet known, not excluding a Cup Final at Wembley or Hogmanay night in Glasgow.

The heat grows more intense. I have been in some warm places during my journalistic life, but never before have I been in a corner which, very literally, is so tight and so hot as this. Our average progress is about one yard a minute, and, sometimes, we are wedged to a complete standstill. My companion, with his expert knowledge of such occasions, estimates the crowd at about *two hundred thousand*. Ponder it! A fifth of a million people crammed into streets too narrow for the safe passage of an ordinary motor-car, streets scorched by a sun so intense that, if it ever smote England, the newspapers would find no type large enough to tell us about it, streets that are shut in by higgledy-piggledy buildings having only one thing in common, and that is to absorb all the heat they can and then radiate it back against your streaming face and body.

Great as this concourse is, it is by no means a record. I think of famous Hindu festivals at which a whole million, and even a million-and-a-half, people have been packed. I remember reading of a renowned

mela (religious fair) held near Lucknow which drew a million people, a hundred of whom were trampled to death in a single morning during a fanatical rush through a narrow street leading to the river. I recall the constant reports of Hindu-Moslem riots which had recently reached me—riots arising from circumstances just like these—such as that at the *Bakr 'Id* (goat-sacrificing) festival at Softa, in the Southern Punjab, where fourteen people were killed and thirty-three injured.

Could I have foreseen that, only a few months later, I should be not far away from this very spot where I am now standing and that a bomb would then be hurled, as it was, into a mass of people streaming away from a Hindu celebration, killing four and injuring forty-five, I should have felt even less comfortable.

Meanwhile, the crowd is still growing. Everyone is anxious to see the thrilling finish, the *Dul-Dul* procession, and the carrying of the *tazias* (shrines). We continue our desperate struggle towards a vantage-point of which my friend knows.

A fiercer effort is now necessary if any progress is to be made. My right hand is pinned into the pocket of my thin silk coat by the pressure of the reeking, sweating crowd whose members, with the light of faith gleaming in their eyes, are glad to endure even this grilling torment for the sake of Islam. My fingers close around a silver cigarette-case in my pocket, but they unclench quickly because the case has grown too warm for comfortable contact.

And now I see a sight which I shall always remember.

It is a small thing, perhaps, but, in these hectic surroundings, it impresses me greatly. My companion is a yard or two in front of me, and I notice a great, dark, wringing-wet stain on the back of his tunic. It begins between the shoulders and stretches down to his waist-belt. For one horrified second, I think he has been stabbed furtively by an enemy (for Police officers necessarily have many among the more desperate characters) and that I am looking on blood. Incidentally, I am to see much blood before the day is out. The stain, curiously enough, is roughly the shape of the map of India which, years ago, hung on the class-room wall at home. It is strange, isn't it, what peculiarly inconsequent thoughts will flash across the mind during even the big moments of life when one should concentrate upon the business in hand?

Then, as I plunge towards him, I realize what has happened. He has perspired until the whole of his clothing is saturated and the moisture has now penetrated even the comparatively thick cloth of his tunic. He tells me that I am in the same condition. Certainly my sleeves, from shoulder to wrist, are soaked and dripping.

We are the only white men among this heaving surge of brown bodies, but nobody, except an occasional Indian constable, pays the least attention to us. All are too intent upon taking up positions from which they can see the ceremonial. We fight our way through four bazaars which are named, in typical Oriental sequence, the Streets of the Apothecaries, the Brothels, the Doctors, and the Midwives. Beyond these quarters, with their outspoken suggestions of the course of

human destiny, the press grows thicker yet. Even the flat house-tops, jagging the sky-line with their carefree irregularity, are alive with watchers. The street gets still a little narrower, and I should have thought it impossible to insert a living skeleton among us. But the unexpected always happens in the East, and it comes upon us now. A few dozen constables appear, and they achieve the miracle of actually compressing this assembly into two super-wedged ranks, leaving a clear lane between them for the use of the processionists.

I am nearly at my last gasp through the pressure and heat when the voice of an Indian friend hails my companion and myself. The voice comes from a house at the corner of a cave-like alleyway. With a mighty effort, we filter into the mouth of this little turning from which is wafted a smell as appalling as anything the Orient can produce—and I have experienced a few. We clamber up two high stone steps and push against an outer door which, in similarly congested circumstances in England, would have given access to nothing more imposing than a stable or, at the best, an unskilled labourer's dwelling.

But this is India. On the other side of that door, divided from the hot stench of the alley by a mere inch or two of woodwork, is one of the most magnificent rooms I have ever entered. No magic carpet ever effected a swifter or more striking transition than those two rough stone steps. Everything here glitters with prosperity. Rugs worth small fortunes; brasswork reflecting the soul of the Benares craftsman; candelabra that Park Lane might covet; wall decorations that make

the art of the Moguls live again ; clocks that might have told Croesus himself the time ; *objets d'art* such as England's poor peers sell to America's rich bean-boilers ; cabinets that transport the mind to Old Cathay ; fans with *real* colours straight from the Land of the Rising Sun ; mirrors of crystal purity ; chairs and tables of gleaming Indian woods ; silks shimmering with the genius of Kashmir and Turkestan—all these beauties of the dream-room delight the eye.

Similar tokens of loveliness and exquisite taste, which can be satisfied only by such wealth as our host possesses, characterize the whole house. The place is an exquisite gem in one of the most highly contrasted settings that one could conceive. That is the way of the East.

Two other English officials are already here. Our Indian acquaintance, a man renowned for his advanced culture and public spirit, entertains each of us in turn. He is a charming and thoughtful host. Nectars of inviting hues, with ice making an entrancing tinkle in the glasses, are brought to us by splendidly-arrayed servants. And at last I know what nectar really means.

We are now conducted through another door which leads to an extremely narrow balcony running the length of the house. Being about five feet high, it commands a perfect view of the procession which is about to pass. So cramped is the space, however, that we are compelled to sit sideways. Mercifully, there is shade from a canopy above. I place my *topee* (pith helmet) on the balustrade—to drain ! Our host brings us dainty little hand-fans, and, for our further cooling, sends for more nectar. In the interval of waiting, he

discusses philosophical questions with consummate skill.

I am about to advance the theory (with which he would agree) that Islam, being a non-subtle, martial, aggressive faith, is likely to gain more ground in the East than Hinduism, with its maze of intricate æsthetic cults, when the celebrants begin to pass and, incidentally, proceed to give point to my contention.

In an experience of public functions ranging over twenty years, I have seen many festivals, but this one will always stand out as the most impressive and, in some ways, the most beautiful. Paradoxically enough, it also remains in my mind as the most terrible, the most grim, and—in a Western sense—the most shocking event I have ever attended.

The procession is so vast, being many miles in extent, that it takes from three to four hours to pass any given point. Every incident in it is watched with the most intense interest by the assembled multitudes. In all the world there is nothing that displays quite the same blend of deep-rooted faith, genuine mourning, spectacular effect and fanatical frenzy. The festival opened three or four days ago, in accordance with the strict rules of the Mahommedan calendar, but its early features have been comparatively quiet. The members of the great crowd here, and millions more throughout Islam, stretching virtually across the globe, have saved themselves up for this afternoon, for the tremendous climax of the Breast-Beating and the *Dul-Dul*.

Even to-day, high-pitched as the public tension is, the leading sections of the procession do not provide much that is really stirring. They consist chiefly of

groups of the Faithful who pass gravely down the human lane bisecting this seething cauldron of humanity. As they walk, they recite Koranic prayers and other ritualistic formulae. Also, they acclaim the power of Ali and the martyrdom of Hasan and Hosain. They are reverently heard. There is everywhere a wonderful sense of sincerity.

Like all the greatest dramatic spectacles, this one begins quietly. There is a deep underlying current of fervour, but it is not very pronounced yet. The Orient likes to build up a climax slowly, but with a terrific cumulative effect.

Meanwhile, in the crowd below, an old Mahommedan, whose head is just level with my feet, devoutly recites the Islamic creed, with its beautiful alliteration and resounding vowels:

> "*La ilaha illa-llahu, Muhammad rasul allahi.*" ("There is no god but God, and Mahomet is His Prophet.")

Another, and then another, and then yet more standing near him take up this simple confession of faith. I hear the vital words issuing from believers along the endless and packed ranks. . . . *La ilaha illa-llahu, Muhammad ra . . . La ilaha illa-llahu, Muhammad . . . La ilaha illa-llahu . . . La ilaha . . .* The resonances of the crowd are gradually lost to hearing.

They become submerged in a great and ever-growing ocean of sound which carries them away like straws in a torrent. A vast, pent-up acclamation swells and

swirls. At first, it is like the sound of breakers on a far-off shore. Then it becomes as the beat of mighty waves against a granite cliff. It is tempestuous, irresistible.

Now I realize the cause. The first groups of the Breast-Beaters are in sight. These are devotees of all ages and classes who publicly mortify the flesh in token of the sufferings of Hasan and Hosain and in veneration of Ali, their father. I have heard much, up to now, of this feature of the ceremony, but this is my first opportunity of seeing it at close quarters.

Six or seven of the Breast-Beaters, bared to the waist, form a circle immediately in line with our host's balcony. In their centre is a leader, a magnificently built man, who sets the pace and conducts his companions in their chants extolling the qualities of Hasan and Hosain. At first, they sing slowly, mournfully. Following the example of their leader, they turn round and round, singing all the time, the speed of the song and the corresponding motion gradually increasing.

As they whirl and chant in extraordinary rhythm, they beat their bare breasts with a downward and oblique slashing motion, using their open palms with tremendous vigour. It seems to me that the heaviest strokes appear to be timed to fall simultaneously with the utterance of the words "Hasan" and "Hosain", those synchronizing with the last-named hero being the more ferocious.

First with the right hand, and then with the left, these men, sweating horribly in the full rays of the merciless sun, wait for the second, and accented, syllables of those revered names and then smite their streaming

bosoms with all their force. Their skin becomes livid, and they heave with the exertion, but still they go on.

Panting and pain-racked, yet borne up by a religious exaltation that the West does not know—or, knowing, does not understand, except to describe it as fanaticism—this group passes farther down the line, to be replaced almost at once by another composed of somewhat younger men who repeat the rite with still greater vigour. Circle after circle is formed, each more passionate than the other.

"What do you think of it?" asks my police companion during a little lull.

"Incredible!" I reply. "Shocking, as well. And yet it has an element of beautiful devotion that I cannot help admiring and—yes—respecting."

"Wait!" says the policeman. "We haven't had the flagellations yet. You may not see so much beauty in those."

As he speaks, I am hailed by a young Mahommedan on the fringe of the crowd below. I scarcely recognize him, for he is stripped to the waist, is barefooted, and, apparently, is wearing little else than an old pair of pyjama-trousers. He is the son of a famous and extremely wealthy Mahommedan scholar, and I have known him rather well for some months, having met him at various functions.

I recall that, not long ago, he came down from a renowned University in England where, after a brilliant career, he blossomed out as an Honours man. Not only is he one of the most charming and eligible *partis* in the East, but he is also regarded as an acquisition to

almost any intellectual circle. Well-born, cultured, clever, handsome, athletic, and with prospects of great wealth, he is one of the best examples of the really advanced and truly educated young men to whom the slowly-evolving New India must look for future guidance.

Yet, here he is! Save for his innate air of distinction, which no costume, or lack of it, can destroy, he looks more like an Aden coaling coolie than a wonderful classical scholar.

He cleaves his way to the outside edge of the balcony until his eyes are about level with my knees.

"Hullo!" he says in his University accent, "fancy seeing you here!"

"Hullo yourself!" I return, trying to speak as casually as I can, as though it is a most natural thing to see one of the richest and ablest bachelors in Indian high society being jostled about, barefooted, in a squalid, reeking, and sweating bazaar. I attempt, also, not to convey the slightest concern at seeing him attired in a single garment that might have come from his sweeper's muck-heap. This is the Orient, the place of the unexpected, where it is not always polite to express surprise.

We chat more or less flippantly for a moment or two. Then:

"About that car I mentioned to you the other evening," he says; "do you know, I can't make up my mind whether to buy a — (and he names a world-famous luxury vehicle) or whether I should get better service from a — (and he refers to another, nearly as

well-known). As you're rather keen on motoring, I'm wondering if you'd tell me anything about the relative performances of those two makes."

"Heavens!" I exclaim. "I haven't got your money, and they're both beyond even my dreams. A 'baby' car must do for a mere scribbler. But, from what I know of other people's purchases, I should certainly get the first one you mentioned, and I hope you'll give me a lift in it sometimes, on a day as hot as this."

"Right!" he agrees cheerily, as though he is talking about the purchase of an eight-anna ice-cream rather than a car costing more money than most Englishmen can earn in four years. "I'll place it on order at once. I'm going to use it for a tour through France in a month or two. I want to get it fitted with a really good wireless receiving set that will pick up all the London programmes as I go along."

"Lucky fellow! That will be much nicer, cooler, and more comfortable than this scorcher, won't it?"

A curious, mystical look creeps into his fine eyes. He is silent for a moment.

"Yes," he says, as he prepares to move away, "I suppose you're right. Yes! it will certainly be more *comfortable*. And yet . . . and yet. I don't know . . ." He breaks off, and turns to go.

"See you later," he calls back.

"Cheerio! See *you* later," I respond, but I do not know, as I say it, in what strange way those lightly-spoken words will prove true.

An hour or more passes. Groups of the Breast-Beaters are still working their way along that human

lane. But now there is a greater intensity in the crowd. I hear a wilder and a more full-throated note in its acclamations. The noise that was like the surge of a distant sea has become a near and all-enveloping tempest. The waves of emotion are here, there and everywhere. They beat in upon us.

This is the voice of Islam—vigorous, pulsating, warlike, ever-advancing Islam. This is the clamour of a faith that has put whole nations to the sword, a belief of fighters and of martyrs. For there is in this mighty religion something tangible, objective, visible, pushful, as compared with the more æsthetic subtleties of higher Hinduism.

The mental vagaries or philosophical speculations of advanced Brahmanism have nothing in common with the spectacle that now bursts upon me. True, it is a shocking enough sight, but not even the least intelligent menial can miss its meaning or doubt its terrible realism. That is one of the secrets of Islam's strength. It is downright, definite, rugged, almost rough, but it is, at the same time, concerned with elementals, with real things and persons. It can be grasped and seen; it is plain-speaking and plain-doing; it is a faith which, so to speak, is concerned with stern facts rather than with intricate theories; it is more interested in actualities than mentalities.

And so, from its myriad supporters comes a thunder of enthusiasm as the more extreme types of Breast-Beaters appear. These are the men who carry out the flagellations of which I have heard. Such a group is opposite the balcony now. In it are three very young men—they are possibly not much more than twenty—

WILD, SNOW-COVERED MOUNTAINOUS COUNTRY SUCH AS THAT TRAVERSED BY HINDU PILGRIMS.

as well as three devotees of middle-age, and a man of about sixty-five, their leader.

"Watch!" says my police friend, leaning towards me. "I hope you won't be sickened too much. It's about as much as I can stand, after years of it. We can come away, if you like."

But I am fascinated, infected by the fervour of the multitude, and I decide to stay.

The three middle-aged men in the new group carry heavy steel chains, a yard or so long, with uneven jagged links. The elderly leader has a still heavier and more cruel-looking chain. In the hands of the three young men are stout leather thongs, like the whips made for big and fierce dogs. To the lashes are attached small curved knives of deadly appearance.

The leader begins his chanting. His followers join their song to his. The great concourse takes it up like the roar of an inrushing tide. The men start to gyrate. As they do so, and as the words "Hasan" and "Hosain" burst forth, they bring their chains and thongs thudding across their bared breasts. Within a minute or two, their skin is a mass of livid bruises.

Then, as the pace increases, they flog themselves the more mercilessly. The chains fly in a glistening curve through the air and find their mark on the tortured flesh. The lashes with their fiendish array of knives dart through the blinding sunlight, and, descending on the shuddering bosom, inflict agonizing cuts. But still the men turn round and round; still their chant does not falter.

It is impossible to convey, by the printed word, the awful fascination of this terrifying sight. How shall

lifeless leaden moulds tell of the fierce hiss of those ever-repeated words—Ha-*sssan*! Ho-*sssain*! Ha-*sssan*! Ho-*sssain*!—and the still fiercer hiss of the knives, keeping time with the feverishly accentuated sibilants, and leaping and curling and twisting, for public exhibition and private penance, around the bodies of living men?

Here is a spectacle that Hollywood, even in its most erotic and sensational mood, would not dare to film. Here are sights and sounds that no white woman could see or hear without becoming physically ill. Indeed, I still have to meet a European woman who has ever witnessed this phase of the festival.

And yet, this is the twentieth century; and I am in a big city of the British Empire, seated almost within arm's length of electric lights and automatic telephones!

I note the growing look of rapture on the flagellators' faces as their agony increases. I watch the fearful joy of the swaying spectators.

Every mention of "Hasan" means a self-inflicted injury; every use of the word "Hosain" brings with it a still crueller wound. I should have thought it impossible that any man, particularly a middle-aged or elderly person, could stand up to such punishment in terrific heat like this. (I discovered later that the shade temperature on this particular afternoon had been unequalled for the past ten years, even in this notoriously hot part of India.) World-famous heavyweights who cannot endure a battering only a tenth as fierce as this, judging by performances I have seen them give, would have been unconscious long ago under such merciless assaults.

Now the blood begins to flow freely from the bodies of the flagellators. The elderly leader has hacked nearly the whole of his chest open, and, every moment, I expect him to begin to falter, though his chanting is as lusty as ever. I notice, with a feeling of nausea, that clouds of flies and other insects settle on each of his newly-inflicted wounds as the crimson streams, mingled with rivulets of perspiration, flow from him.

All this torture, however, he suffers gladly, proudly. The acclaim of the crowd urges him to still more frantic mutilation. Is it not ordained that the Faithful who suffer the most for the sake of the martyred Hasan's and Hosain's memory shall acquire the greatest merit ?

Meanwhile, the roar of the concourse increases with every blow. When the blood spurts more freely than before, the packed thousands yell the louder. An unrestrained sweep of the knife that sends the skin flying from a young man's breast produces a vast booming note of appreciation and satisfaction.

Sickened, I turn my gaze away, to find that the policeman is watching me interestedly.

"Well ?" he inquires.

"What is the secret of it ?" I ask him. "Do these people really enjoy seeing suffering and blood, such as you get at a Spanish bull-fight ? Is it simply religious frenzy that draws and holds this crowd, or is it a strain of sadism ?"

"Both," is his laconic reply.

Turning to look at the Breast-Beaters again, I notice that one of the young men is in an apparently terrible condition. Up to this moment, owing to the immense crowd in front of the group, I have not been able to

observe him clearly, but now, as he pivots a little closer, intoning his endless chant and sending the string of knives in merciless strokes across his body, I see that his back and left side are a welter of wounds.

As he turns round and faces me, he is a ghastly sight. Blood pours from a dozen places in his chest, and masses of loathsome insects are adding to his torture. While the knives go coiling around his head ready for another stroke these winged tormentors attack him. As the crimsoned blades descend, they fly away only to return instantly the thong is raised again. Streams of blood and sweat, blending disgustingly, gush from the young man's breast, flow to his waist and begin to dye his pair of very tattered pyjama-trousers.

A horrifying thought occurs to me. That old muck-heap garment! I have seen it earlier this afternoon. I remember the peculiarity of its pattern. I look closely into the young man's face, now disfigured with blood splashes, sweat and agony.

Yes! This is my friend—the brilliant young scholar, product of an English University, the darling bachelor of a thousand Indian society hostesses, purchaser of superb motor-cars and luxury wireless-sets, rich, handsome, eligible, cultured, flagellating himself before the gaze of two hundred thousand people, for the love of Hasan and Hosain who died more than twelve hundred years ago!

At last, I understand that mystical look in his eyes as he had turned to leave me only an hour ago. The secret of his costume is revealed. Martyrs in a common cause need not be polished, distinguished, or well-

dressed. They require only to be strong and determined and, above everything, men. So, for the sake of his religion, he has come down to the level of any one of Islam's two hundred millions.

And I had said to him, flippantly, that very afternoon, at this self-same spot: "See you later!" He for his part had replied nothing to that, but had merely turned away to his voluntary martyrdom, for all Breast-Beaters are volunteers and, incidentally, there is never any lack of them. He had known then that he would be seen by me, as the stations on the route of the procession are exactly arranged beforehand, but he had given no hint. Self-torture, to him, might have been as casual as afternoon tea at the Bombay Taj.

And now, when I *do* see him later, I do not know whether he is a hero or . . . but, never mind, he is my friend.

Nevertheless, I cannot help wondering what would be the impressions of, say, an English strict and particular Baptist, or a Primitive Methodist, or any white man who prides himself upon his unwavering love for his religion, if he could stand by my side and see this awesome spectacle. Would he think that his devotion to his creed is as deep, passionate and sacrificial as that displayed by these Mahommedans of *all* classes in their zeal to glorify and to emulate those who have died in the service of their God? I reflect too upon the hundred people in England who go motoring on Sundays for every one who attends a church; and I compare those pleasure-crazed multitudes with my Indian friend who, though he also has his motor-cars and riches and charm and culture, hacks the skin from his breast in a filthy

street under a blazing sun and in a sweeper's clothes because of the rock-founded faith that is in him. Which, think you, exercises the greater grip upon the body and soul of the masses—the light, transient, *soufflé* type of religion that passes for Christianity in Britain to-day, or the thonged, knife-edged convictions of this disciplined and forceful Islam sometimes described by ill-informed missionaries as "heathenism"?

The twice-in-a-lifetime English churchgoer—he who is found inside a place of worship for his baptism and marriage only—might well feel ashamed if he could see, and live among, vast numbers of Moslems. He would talk less of "dirty infidels" if he toiled among these earnest people whose belief, standing impregnable, impels them to constant ablutions and to five definite acts of worship every day, acts in which the sublime *Fatiha* (beginning) of the Koran, or the Lord's Prayer of the Faithful, is fervently repeated upwards of twenty times.

I hear it chanted now by a fine upstanding follower of the Prophet in the still packed street below me. He intones it because it is near the hour of sunset, a time which is among those ordained for prayer, and the last awful group of Breast-Beaters has now passed. The beautiful words come to me, just audible above the mass murmur of the crowd :

> "In the name of God, the compassionate ! Praise God, the Lord of all creatures ! God the Merciful, the Controller of the Day of Judgment ! Thee do we worship and of Thee do we implore aid. Guide us in the right way, the way of those to whom Thou hast shown grace, on whom there is no anger and who do not go astray !"

Words, these, which might have come straight from our Bible (as indeed some of them have) instead of from the Koran. Christian sentiments, indeed, from the so-called "infidels"!

As I hear the wonderful moving phrases, exquisite in their simplicity, yet sublime in their strength, I think again of the West's ignorant references to the "heathenism" of the East—the East from which our own and all the great religions have sprung. And then my mind goes back to the Breast-Beaters with their reek of sweat and blood—back to the flashing knives with which men of culture gashed their chests until they nearly fainted amid that stifling throng.

Is this the mark of deep, abiding belief, more earnest and convincing than anything the white man can show? Is it the sheer hysteria of religious fanaticism? Or is it just a blend of faith and fury, induced, as some sceptics have told me, by a little *dhatura*, the deadly Indian drug that raises its addicts to incredible heights of frenzy and indifference to pain, before it finally dashes them down to death?

I cannot say. I can only relate, as precisely as I can, what three white companions and myself, solitary Englishmen among these hundreds of thousands of Indians, see and hear during this blazing day.

A middle-aged man staggers by. His moustache, sure sign that he is one of the Faithful, who do not shave the upper lip, is flecked with blood. His skin, from neck to waist, back and front, is in tatters. It hangs in ribbons which are mixed sickeningly with the red-stained remains of a slashed shirt. Great pools of crimson are spread over his once-white cotton trousers. He

presents a fearful spectacle, this martyr to the memory of Hasan and Hosain. Separated from one of the last groups of the Breast-Beaters, he has wandered back here, blindly groping his way, knowing not where he is going.

As he passes, the sea of onlookers parts to make way for him. Men shout his praises, hail him as having acquired great merit, gaze reverently upon him—and let him go.

I shut my eyes and I can imagine that I am back in a crowded London theatre hearing again the deep overwhelming throb of pent-up emotion that marks the exit of an actor who has touched all hearts.

I open my eyes and I am in Central India watching a poor fellow creature who, having almost flogged himself to death, is applauded as very holy. Soon he must drop from loss of blood, but still the crowd salutes him—and lets him pass.

It is a Hindu—an unclean "untouchable", despised and rejected of men, who at last provides him with the glass of water that saves his life.

It is a Hindu who renders him a rough sort of first-aid and tends his wounds. It is a Hindu who, though an outcaste, also acquires great merit this day in the eye of the God of all races and creeds. Yes ; it is a Hindu, an idolator, suddenly appearing from a dark pestilent courtyard, who does all this. To-morrow, he and his brethren might be, as they often are, at the throats of the Moslems, but this afternoon, here is a sick man who wants succour, a nearly dying man, who, though he was duly praised by the Faithful, was left to stagger on, unaided by them.

Another voice near me chants the *Fatiha*. . . . "In the name of God, the compassionate . . . guide us in the right way. The way of those on whom there is no wrath and who do not go astray!"

But, as I look on that cup of water, and those tender "unclean" hands, it might be the pariah, and not the Moslem, who is saying and living that lovely prayer.

. . . . .

There is a stir among the multitude; an ever-increasing roar wells up to the packed roofs. It heralds the coming of Hosain's horse, typifying the return of the dead warrior's mount from the fatal battlefield of Kerbela.

Grandeur and pure pageantry are the keynotes of this part of the Passion Play. The grimness is gone, to be replaced by colour and beauty. The nauseating self-torture gives way to the spectacular imagery of the *Dul-Dul*.

The hero is the horse, a majestic, high-stepping Arab of pure white. This animal, my host tells me, has been specially fed and groomed for a whole year in preparation for these few hours which crown its career. During the twelve months, it has been allowed to do no work, for toil would be regarded as desecrating a creature selected for so high an honour. Should it come into the care of a devout Moslem after this day, I imagine that its life will continue to be one of pampered ease.

Now, with dazzling cloth-of-gold across its back, it steps out haughtily. In its beautiful trappings a

number of silver arrows—mementoes of battle—are cunningly arranged in such a way that they seem to pierce the flanks. Dignified processionists walk on either side of this gorgeous mount. Over its head, a shimmering canopy is held. Other attendants wave spreading plumes of radiant colours to and fro.

As the horse approaches, the enthusiasm grows to fever-point. "*Hosain! Hosain! Hosain!*" The name issues from the throats of thousands upon thousands. It pierces the fiery air in overwhelming tribute.

Important functionaries walk proudly and happily in front of the animal. Other processionists occupy a place of honour behind it. These are women, dressed, for the most part, in sombre black. Some of them, interrupting their walk, turn round and round, shouting *Hosain!* in their shrill voices. Others clutch at their bosoms and rock to and fro, weeping and wailing for the martyrdom of Hosain and the death of Ali.

Are these women, like the men in front, dignified lights of the religious world? Well, it depends on the point of view. *They are representatives of the city's prostitutes! And this is one of the proudest and most reverent moments of their lives!*

In the East, let it be remembered, brothels are not necessarily regarded as places of shame; neither are the women who occupy them looked upon as fallen creatures of ill fame. Watching them, I realize how radically different are the conceptions of East and West. I perceive, too, that Islam is an all-embracing faith, taking no account of what the Occident is pleased to view as social distinctions.

. . . . .

Again the scene changes. It is not the stateliness of Hosain's horse, or its rich caparison, or its fervent retinue, which thrills the beholders. There is a more solemn note, an undercurrent of deeper decorum, almost of proud sorrow, as the final stages of the Moharram are reached with the bearing of the *tazias*—coffin-like tributes to the martyrs—through the vast concourse.

These emblems, or *tabuts*, as I have heard them called, are excellently wrought representations, in miniature, of the shrines erected to the memory of Hasan and Hosain. Great importance is attached to this part of the pageant. With an air of sad triumph, the *tazias* are carried past the hosts of Islam and deposited in an open space.

The sun, cruel tyrant of the day, is sinking in a blaze of beauty, and the moon, gentle guardian of the night, is preparing to open her queenly court amid the afterglow—for there are no long twilights in India—as my police friend and I, having thanked our Indian host, make our way to the car through the still packed bazaars.

The *tazias* are still being borne as we leave. The emotions of joy and sorrow, of pride and suffering, of sacrifice and faith, as voiced by the great masses, come yet to our ears. But the frenzy is dying, though the fervour of the heart, strongly rooted, remains.

Now the sky is purpling. Soon it will be gem-studded in a display with which the pageantry of men, and even of the Orient, cannot compete. As our car approaches one of the city gates, we pass a beautiful mosque. Already

the Faithful are being called to worship. "*Es-solla! Es-solla!*" ascends the cry of the devout. "Come and pray! Come and pray!"

Presently, within that building, with its lovely mosaics and inlays, the Moslems will be gathered, for the after-sunset prayer, not in twos and threes, like rare Christians at weekday evensong, but densely packed, earnest, eager to approach their God.

There, they will not sit stiffly, listening politely to a set form of words, languidly mumbling responses, and occasionally pillowing the knee on a comfortable hassock, as Christians do, on the few occasions when they publicly worship at all. No! these "heathens" will kneel on the floor—kneel as one man; and they will prostrate themselves, with their foreheads pressed to the hard uncomfortable ground. Once more, they will proclaim, in ringing tones, fired with conviction, the greatness of the One God, *Allah Akbar*! Again they will pray to be guided in the right way.

They are streaming in now. The precincts become a human sea whose waves are crested with the many colours of the worshippers' turbans. On this great day, their most gorgeous and vivid headdress is brought forth. Scarlet, yellow, blue, green, orange, violet, purple, and a host of in-between hues cap the living billows that surge towards the entrance.

From many a tapering minaret floats the *muezzin's* long-drawn-out musical voice urging the Believers to worship, for prayer to the Faithful is better than sleep, and even better than food. No once-in-a-while religion, this. It is something that stirs the hearts of millions *five times in every day.*

Our car swings through a gate into the European Station. Above the purr of the engine I hear the words of the *adan*, with its vital declaration . . . "There is no god but God !"

. . . . .

We are nearing the end of our journey when I see my young Mahommedan friend again. He is reclining, exhausted, in the elegant motor-car of an acquaintance Over his tortured breast and back, a thin garment has been thrown. An older man is with him, bending solicitously over him, and looking at him with a blend of compassion and pride. Their car has come to a standstill. Perhaps they are discussing whether or not my friend should receive medical attention.

As we glide slowly past the limousine, a shaft of glory from the departing sun leaps out upon the young Mahommedan. I am reminded, irresistibly, of the way in which a theatre limelight suddenly shines upon a hero. But this is the eye of Heaven which focuses a golden ray upon him, almost as if in tribute.

Limned strongly in the beam, his face is that of a transfigured man. It tells more of peace than of suffering. His eyes catch mine. I wave my hand and smile at him, a little sadly perhaps. But there is no sadness in his answering gaze. There is nothing but happiness, and a contentment which we of the West may never fathom.

. . . . .

I am back at work again, encompassed by the

grinding wheels of modern industry. Several Mahommedans are leaving the office as I enter. They are on their way to prayer. To them, also, the *muezzin* at the distant mosque is calling. One elderly fellow, a capital and conscientious craftsman, murmurs as he passes me: "*La ilaha illa-llahu!*" "There is no god but God!" . . .

I turn to my duties. It so happens that the very first thing calling for consideration is a cabled report from London.

It relates that a certain cleric of the West End had been severely criticized for declaring, on the previous evening, that Britain's pleasure-mad youth is turning away from religion and is "pursuing cocktails rather than Christianity".

Perhaps I am cowardly, but . . . well, I am an Englishman, and I feel just a little grateful that the rich young University graduate, whom I have just left, is not with me now. Yes; I am relieved to think that he is not here to see those words, "cocktails rather than Christianity". I am glad that he is not bending his knife-scourged back to look over my shoulder and to read them.

. . . . .

Strange, even terrifying, as are the things done in the name of religious heroes, as witness the Mahommedan ceremony which I have already described, the service of the Hindu deities demands rites and sacrifices which can be equally appalling.

One outstanding instance comes to my mind. It is the Tragedy of Amarnath, which occurred towards the end of August, 1928, among the ice-bound pinnacles

of Eastern Kashmir. Details of this remarkable event passed through my hands at the time. They constitute one of the grimmest dramas of modern days, a story which, had it occurred in the Western world, would have startled humanity.

Even now, jaded with sensation as the public is, if a playwright should set down the story exactly as it happened, and if a daring producer should stage it, audiences would regard it as unbelievable. Here is the narrative, compiled from records given me by trustworthy witnesses :

At *Puran Mashi*—that is, when the moon is at the full during *Sawan*, the chief rainy month of the Hindus, usually in July or August—*sadhus* (holy men) and devotees of both sexes make a pilgrimage to the sacred cave of Amarnath from all parts of India.

This is a terrible journey. In many respects it teems with more perils than those which are generally undergone by the Moslem whose red-dyed beard indicates that he has made the journey to Mecca. For Amarnath is in a region which is not very far removed from the roof of the world.

It stands amid the mighty crags of the Himalayas at a height of sixteen thousand feet, some ninety miles beyond Srinagar. The icy and precipitous approaches are indescribably difficult, but knowledge of the obstacles did not deter the pilgrims who gathered at Srinagar (the dirty, odorous, and much-overrated "Venice of the East") in readiness for their ordeal.

They numbered, roughly, five thousand, and included nearly three thousand men, about two thousand women and a hundred and seventeen children. With them

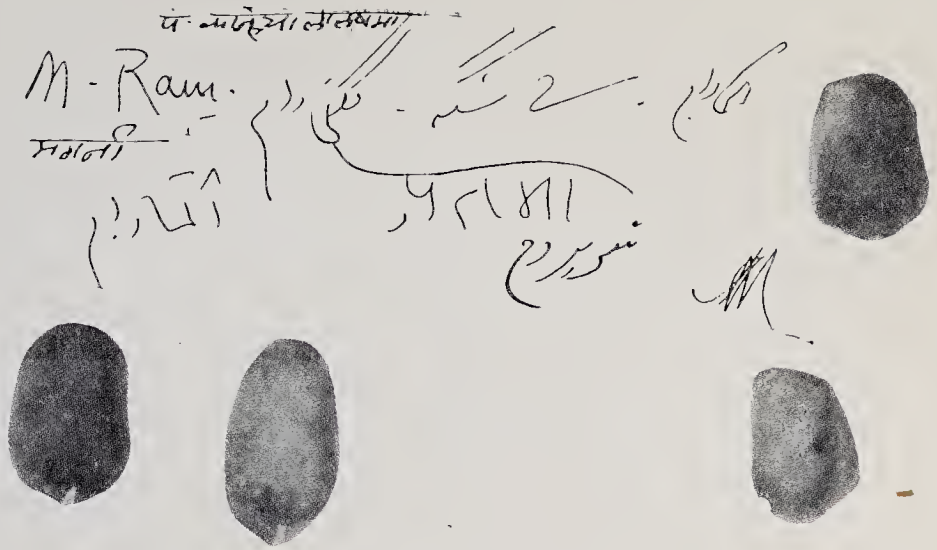
were two thousand coolies and thirteen hundred pack-mules. Journeys like these into the wilds of Kashmir, above the snow-line, involve an elaborate transport-organization to ensure the feeding of men and beasts in regions of intense cold where nothing grows and no supplies can be obtained.

From Srinagar, the gigantic cavalcade set out for Pahlgam, 58 miles to the east. This stage of the pilgrimage occupied several days. Shortly after Srinagar was left behind, the weather became threatening, but the zealous throng pressed onwards and upwards. At last, undeterred by hardships, especially among the women and children, the company reached Pahlgam on August 26th.

Arduous as the travel had been up to this point, it was almost luxurious compared with the terrible route that still had to be taken. From Pahlgam to Amarnath is at least four days' "march," if so ironic a term may be used to describe that grim trail.

After the arrival at Pahlgam the weather improved a little, and there was brilliant sunshine when the pilgrims, having halted for two days at this noted health resort, set out for Chandawari, which they reached on the 28th.

The weather now grew very rainy and stormy, and the next section of the increasingly difficult bridle-path route over the mountains to Sheshnag was completed with much trouble. The main caravan, however, arrived safely at that place on the 29th, though many of the women and children, and some of the older men, had turned back during the day, eventually reaching their starting-point.



FACSIMILE OF SIGNATURES TO A MANIFESTO BY A GROUP OF PUBLIC MEN IN INDIA ASKING FOR CERTAIN GRIEVANCES TO BE REDRESSED. SO ILLITERATE IS THE COUNTRY THAT IT WILL BE NOTED THAT FOUR OF THESE MEN HAD TO SIGN BY MAKING THEIR THUMB-PRINTS.

Now the storm gathered in fury around the thousands assembled at Sheshnag. Bitter winds roared down from the icy peaks, and, at this great altitude, the cold was intensely felt by the poorly-clad devotees. The Hindus, be it remembered, included people who had travelled to these dizzy heights from the plains of India—plains scorched by summer's sweltering heat.

Even so, though they shivered in their miserably meagre *dhotis* and other thin garments, they were anxious to press on to the cave, still two days' journey distant.

Always before them was the silver trident of *Shivaji*, the mystic and priceless symbol which the holiest of the *sadhus* were to carry triumphantly into the heart of the sacred cave, thereby acquiring great merit for themselves and for all who accompanied them during the final stages (more hazardous than any) of the enterprise.

Not for many years, however, had the sleet whirled down so furiously, or the hurricanes raged so intensely. To go on, in such circumstances, along steeply-shelving ledges that demand the use of ice-axes and scarcely provide foothold for a goat—ledges on which one false step means a death-plunge into a frightful abyss—might have led to extermination.

I find it stated among my notes that, according to a *communiqué* which I received from the Kashmir Government, warnings were issued to the devotees by the State officials who are always detailed to accompany the pilgrims, and to assist them in the matter of rations, transport, accommodation, fuel and medical aid.

Knowing the exceptional dangers to be encountered in the howling tempest, they strongly advised a return to Chandawari and Pahlgam.

Fortunately, the travellers, with the exception of 175 of the ultra-devout *sadhus* and their followers, realized that Fate was too powerful for them, and took this advice. They began the tortuous trek back to comparative safety. Had they not done so promptly, it is certain that hundreds would have died, while, if they had continued, in such great numbers, to make the ascent towards the cave, it is no exaggeration to state that thousands would have perished.

Even as things were, the returning pilgrims were overtaken by tragedy. Rain during the preceding weeks had been so heavy, and floods in Kashmir had been so widespread, that mountain rivers, mostly tributaries of the mighty Indus, were now changed into boiling torrents. At places, the solitary track had become almost obliterated, and, at other points, it was completely swept away.

Over the raging Lidar river a narrow bridge suddenly collapsed and vanished after a great number of the main party had crossed over. Some two thousand people who had not yet made the passage were left stranded on the far (Tibetan) side, separated from their friends by a foaming stretch of wind-lashed water which proved impassable.

Working desperately in the storm, helpers improvised a rough ropeway to span the chasm, and, by this means, food and other supplies were hauled across to the frantic people on the eastern banks. Meanwhile, messengers were sent post-haste to Pahlgam and Srinagar for

assistance. Doctors and medical supplies, tents, blankets and fuel were rushed to the scene, and all available means of transport were commandeered.

A temporary bridge was made to replace the destroyed structure and, without undue delay, the stranded Hindus were able to cross the torrent and to rejoin their companions.

Worse, however, was to come. Other bridges had been wrecked in the tempest, and the return became one of horror. Many more lives were forfeited in this enterprise before the cavalcade, now sadly straggling, wound its way into Pahlgam and Srinagar.

No one can ever estimate the measure of agony endured by the little children, the women and the men in this battle with fierce and unrelenting Nature. The bones of the dead, bleached in the sunshine that, too late, followed the blizzard, bore the fullest testimony to the sufferings endured in the name of religion. Even India, the land of many strange tragedies, the country where dead men are often of less account than living faiths, found itself shocked by this epic sacrifice.

For several days, and all through many nights, my telephone bell in the biggest town near the Kashmir frontier continued to ring. Always there came the same question: "Have you any news of the Amarnath pilgrims? Have you the names of any of the dead?" In a single day nearly nine hundred inquiries poured in from Amritsar, the home-city of many of the pilgrims.

England, too, had its imagination stirred by the dramatic events, and urgent cablegrams came from great

daily journals seeking information. It so happened that my newspaper, *The Civil and Military Gazette*, from whose file and by whose courtesy I have been able to supplement my notes, had an excellent system of communication even with wild and inaccessible parts of Asia, and I was able, therefore, to tell private inquirers and the outside world much of what had happened. But, despite this, I have never ascertained the complete extent of the tragedy though I hold evidence that between seventy-five and a hundred souls perished outright, while at least six hundred suffered grave injury. In addition, scores died subsequently. A few weeks later, when I had occasion to travel to another and distant corner of India, and therefore lost immediate touch with this particular event, the pilgrimage continued to be a topic of conversation, and the names of the dead were still drifting through.

. . . . .

You will ask what became of the *sadhus*, those very holy men who, refusing to heed the warnings of deadly peril, persisted in carrying the silver trident to the sacred cave ?

Of their sufferings—the battle against enormous odds of those who went on, and the agonies of those who fell by the way—no pen has yet told the full story. I cannot relate it here, for the complete truth of that Progress of Pain, through the whirlwinds in the high wild places of earth, will never be known. I can only try to fill in some of the gaps from notes which I made during those days.

It is certain that, from the time when the main party of pilgrims began their grim retreat, the weather in the still sterner regions leading to the cave grew steadily worse.

Nevertheless, clambering over dizzy precipices and worming their way around the edges of awful ravines, the devout followed their leaders, upon whom had fallen the great honour of bearing the precious silver trident of their god. The path led ever upward. Torrents of rain fell increasingly. Flurries of snow, whirled by the hurricane from the forbidding breasts of the mountain, were dashed against the pilgrims.

Nothing daunted, they went on doggedly, although the cave was still more than a day distant. So terrible an ascent, under conditions so dreadful, would have crushed the courage and broken the bodies of even the finest athletes. But these men were fired with a zeal that ignored all difficulties.

There were many who paid the extreme penalty, but I venture to think that, as they laid down their lives in this sacred cause, they thought happily of the merit that they had thereby acquired—merit to stand them in good stead in their next incarnation.

Deliberate human sacrifice has not completely passed away from Hinduism. The black *Kali*, goddess of destruction, in her repulsive shrine at Calcutta (the city which bears her name) may not demand a surfeit of the blood of men and women, though the sadism and sex-lust at her terrible shrine are fearful enough to-day. It is true that living victims for the slaughter are no longer demanded by that hideous deity, which is worshipped

by millions—the deity with her protruding blood-splashed tongue, her numerous arms full of skulls, her monstrous waist girdled with human hands and mouths, and her odious feet planted upon piles of corpses. But these *sadhus* of whom I write gave up their lives just as certainly and frenziedly as the devotees of old. They exchanged the furnace heat of Calcutta and the cities of the plains for the storm-bound peaks of the world's mightiest mountains where they froze to death.

The cave of Amarnath is situated in a narrow, almost inaccessible, valley high among the crags. Always, the bottom of this valley is deeply covered with snow. Nearly surrounding this depression are limestone rocks twisted and gnarled into fantastic and weird shapes. Their heads, reared upwards at crazy angles, stab the skyline in a series of grotesque needle-points. The bizarre effect is intensified by the colour of these pinnacles—a yellowish-red which particularly appeals to the æsthetic sense of *Shiva*-worshippers.

And, now, mark the appalling sufferings of such of the zealots as remained alive at this, the final and most difficult part of the journey. *The rigid custom of their faith has decreed that this stage shall be travelled completely naked!*

Thus, oblivious to the storm, disregarding the sickening heights and the jagged rocks that tore at their feet and pierced their bodies, the pilgrims complied with the rule.

Those who entered the holy cave did so in the ordained manner. They shouted with joy at the accomplishment of their journey, forgetting, perhaps, in this

moment of exaltation, those who had perished from exposure.

The precious trident was duly borne to the shrine. It was taken there to the accompaniment of chants by the *sadhus*—chants in which the passions and the mysticism of the East blended in a weird cadence.

Triumphantly, the silver token passed through the giant mouth of the cave, 160 feet high, to the inner spaces of the cavern where there is a vast hemispherical hollow. There it was held aloft before a mammoth block of crystal-clear ice which was formed in that dim recess when the world was still young.

Superimposed on this monster slab of ice are several solid dome-shaped masses, deposited through the action of hidden springs of water which, centuries ago, became frozen.

To one of these objects, about two feet high and occupying the central position of honour, a markedly fervent reverence was paid by the survivors. The veneration shown to it was regarded as the more complete and satisfying because, as the *sadhus* emerged from the cave, numbers of pigeons, which normally have a sheltered abode in the deep fissures of the rocks, flew outside, frightened by the clamorous chanting. This, said the holy men, was a sure sign that great merit had been acquired by the worshippers.

What was that central and specially adored object surmounting the ice-block of Amarnath, which drew naked men, in this way, from the burning valleys of lower India to the death-dealing frozen buttresses of the roof of the world? Was it some gracious

deity, or some inspiring, soul-satisfying element of beauty ?

No ; the thing that caused them to go cheerfully through an earthly hell, to make light of hardships that shocked mankind, and even to yield up their lives amid the hideous severities of High Asia was merely a lump of ice which had happened to assume the form of a phallus !

CHAPTER VII

THE LAND OF THE GREAT UNREAD

SINCE Paradox is the other name for India, I have, for many years, ceased to be surprised at the fact that the great sub-continent which contains vast hordes of unwanted and almost unemployable Bachelors of Art, all fresh and hot from the University bakehouses, should also be the land in which one finds an incredible number of millions who can neither read nor write.

The dense cloud of utter illiteracy that enshrouds the land between Peshawar and Cape Cormorin is something whose true significance only strikes the observer who is called upon to reside in India and to toil among its peoples, as I have done. Tourists and other casual visitors, who dash through the country in a week or ten days, can know nothing of this vital phase of the common life, for they are in contact only with the clubs and great hotels, where they meet educated and travelled Indians; or they move about only in the splendidly equipped luxury-trains, and are impressed by the knowledge of English and the general air of efficiency displayed by officials connected with the "crack" services. Possibly, they think how progressive and advanced the people have become, and they make notes in their diaries to the effect that the Indian is a well-educated person.

If these travellers have erasers, let them use them

on such entries, for their impressions are entirely misleading. They have seen only the fringe of the *real* India. They have come into contact only with the man-in-a-thousand type who has the means to patronize the big hotels, while, as for the hand-picked, efficient, linguistic railway officials, the tourists do not know that such men are probably the "lions" of their native places, and are looked upon as something after the fashion of supermen by reason of their rarity.

It would not be too much to say that a guard on the railway is almost a god in the village, while a minor clerk—a man who actually earns a few rupees for his ability to use his pen and his head—is a man who has certainly "got there". Compared with the humble fellows of his native place, he lives in a blaze of glory. What is more, if he should be in the service of some big industrial corporation, he is expected to act as a personal employment bureau, set up by himself, solely in the interests of the men of his family and, after them, the acquaintances in his immediate circle.

It is pathetic to note the veneration accorded by the ordinary village-dwelling Indian, who constitutes ninety per cent. of the population, to anyone of his own class who can read and write English. A man may study magic and hypnotism until he is able to produce, or to appear to produce, tall trees from tiny seeds in the twinkling of an eye. Or, under your very nose, he can truss up a boy in a tiny basket, pierce the receptacle with sword-thrusts, and then show that it is empty and that the child was never there, but was up a tree yards away. All this will command little more than the polite interest of his fellows. But, let him

prove that he can really and truly interpret written characters and, better still, form similar characters with his own hand, and immediately he is well in the running for an exalted position as village sage.

Almost certainly he will become the local letter-writer and document-decipherer. To him, in that capacity, the secrets of many households will be bared. Through him, the local populace, assembled beneath the *deodar*, will learn the contents of a belated newspaper. Should he have a political bent, as is often the case, he will exercise an effective censorship during his reading, by the simple process of completely skipping anything with which he does not approve, slurring over items about which he is in doubt, and emphasizing and enlarging upon whatever happens to coincide with his views.

A reading of this kind thus becomes a sort of informal court at which one man, the reader himself, fills the combined rôles of advocate, witness, judge and jury. The illiterate villagers, having no means of acquiring knowledge independently, and, therefore, of arriving at free conclusions, are wholly at his mercy. He becomes, virtually, the local dictator, although his knowledge of the three "R's," in point of fact, would disgrace a Fourth Standard boy at a Council School in England.

Illiteracy thus has a doubly evil effect. Not only does it deprive the rank-and-file of the opportunities of weighing facts and drawing their own inferences, but it also imparts, throughout India, a sense of power to people whose real attainments are out of all proportion to their inflated prestige.

In its turn, this has led to the artificial importance enjoyed by the swarms of obscure, purely political newspapers which infest every part of India. Their conductors know that the utterly biased contents of these rags will never be closely studied in the light of the knowledge that comes from an ability to read both sides of the case. They know also that these contents will be disseminated and interpreted to a wider audience almost entirely by half-educated readers whose sole aim is to gain power for themselves and their families, or their co-religionists.

Thus, a paper with a sale of only a hundred copies —and there are many with even smaller circulations— may have an enormously mischievous effect when each of those hundred readers spreads its inflammatory contents, plus imaginative embellishments and verbal fireworks of his own, to scores of illiterates.

It is obvious that the effect is the same as, or even worse than, that which would be achieved if many thousand copies were printed and circulated, while the expense is gratifyingly less.

A bazaar newspaper is fearfully and wonderfully contrived. Its capital, in many cases, is almost nothing, and its conscience is serenely nil. Often, its staff consists of only one man, probably a University B.A., whose politics are as covetous as his pocket, and whose scruples are as short as his cash. This individual acts as editor, sub-editor, manager, reporter, advertisement canvasser, sales-organizer, printer and publisher all merged into one. Unhappily, there has never been an Indian Gilbert to deal justly with this Pooh-Bah of the bazaar.

It is likely that his office is a verminous rat-hole in some plaguey attic or cellar. There, imbued with all uncharitableness, he writes his violent leading articles, and fills up what remains of his sheet, sometimes consisting only of a single page, with bits of news which he first steals outright from honest newspapers and then distorts to suit his fancy. His printing equipment may be merely a rudimentary cyclostyle affair. In a few instances, I have known this type of press proprietor to squat on the floor amid dust, grime and ink, and to engrave his daily contents—articles, news, advertisements and all—directly by his own hand on to a species of lithographic stone from which he strikes off his subsequent copies. Truly, a versatile journalist.

On one occasion there was a tragedy which almost overwhelmed the industrious life of such a prodigy. A promised half-page advertisement from a local quack doctor, extolling some disgusting aphrodisiac, failed to arrive, and our editor-manager, etc., etc., was faced, at nearly midnight, with the necessity of lengthening his leading article by another three-and-a-half columns to make good the deficiency. This particular editor-and-so-on had achieved the dignity of possessing a few old and incomplete type-founts from which he was in the habit of setting up his paper by his own hand. Now, faced by this crisis, he had to compose his extended leading article both in his head and by his hand at one and the same time. The task occupied him almost twelve hours, with the result that his paper came out in the afternoon instead of in the morning.

During the all-night setting, a friend called to find the editor in despair and at a standstill, being unable

to make further progress with the concluding paragraph of his article. This was a violent attack on the Government for its alleged unnecessarily stern measures when restoring order after a riot in which a few Hindu and Moslem heads had been impartially cracked.

"I *must* call these police officials 'barbarians'," wailed the editor, "because I've already printed that word in the headline to the article."

"All right," said the friend mystified, "why don't you get on with it, then, and do so ?"

"Alas," groaned the printer-pundit, "there is not a letter 'b' left. They are all used somewhere else in the paper. Indeed, I've run short of every letter except 's'."

"Then call the police *assassins* instead," advised the friend.

And it was so !

The harm done by newspapers of this class is incalculable, and the Government's efforts to accomplish anything in the nature of counter-propaganda are feeble in the extreme. The illiteracy of the country plays directly into the hands of agitators, who see to it that the "news" and opinions in such rags, distorted from the very beginning, are re-distorted and embellished by the handful of readers who alone are able to pass on the contents, by word of mouth, to thousands of totally uneducated and gullible people.

Lord Burnham, with his life-long knowledge of Press matters, must have had some such thought in his mind when he wrote, in the Simon Report, this grave warning :

> "It may be said that public opinion in India is, in the main, not more than that of the politically-minded sections of the

> population, whose views find expression in the Indian-owned Press. To repeat a phrase used in Vol. I of our Report, the 'effective' circulation of Indian newspapers is much greater than the figure of their cash sales. Thus, both directly and indirectly, rumour and defamation obtain, by means of the Press, a very wide currency and credit throughout the whole of the sub-continent from all the centres where news is collected and published. The Government of India and all its agents are subjected to unceasing attack and vituperation which they endure in dignified silence, on the principle that it is not worth while to controvert or rebut them, because, in the long run, the facts of the case will speak for themselves. I believe that this method of dealing with the matter cannot be further continued without grave risk and disadvantage to British rule in India . . . In most of the Press codes of the civilised world, including France and Germany, after a general declaration in favour of the freedom of the Press, provision is made for protecting persons in authority. In the case of both the above-mentioned countries, newspapers are also obliged to publish corrections made by officials in answer to charges that may have been published in their own columns. I suggest that some such statutory power should exist in British India, in order to afford adequate protection to public officials of all kinds, military and civil, in the discharge of their duties and thus both vindicate the integrity and honour of the public service and, what is still more important, prevent authority itself from being brought into general odium and despite."

A further undesirable reaction of general illiteracy is found in the jobbery which so many semi-demi sages exercise on behalf of their more unfortunate friends, the Great Unread. I have already mentioned that the reading-and-writing man, provided that he has achieved the miracle, in the eyes of simple peasants, of obtaining a small clerkship, or a railway ticket-collectorship, or,

better still, an obscure Government post, is a very unorthodox Indian if he does not forthwith pull every available wire on behalf of his family and friends. Now, although it must be admitted that blood-ties are very strong in the East, and that a man's desires to help his kith and kin and closest friends are natural and praiseworthy, these services are not, as a rule, rendered gratuitously.

Bribery, accompanied by a maze of intrigue, enters into the matter. Often these steps are directed towards efforts to secure the dismissal, by hook or by crook (usually the last named), of employees of an opposite faith, so that a plotter's co-religionists, preferably members of his own family, may be appointed in their stead.

Some of the posts involved are worth only a very few shillings a week, but that does not lessen the fervour with which the more pushful of the literates enter into a contest which has almost become a sort of national sport.

I know of a case in which a man who was taken into the employment of a company could read just enough to be able to carry out duties compared with which an English straight-from-school office-boy's keeping of the stamp book would rank as the advanced stages of chartered accountancy. This man, who, incidentally, was much married, earned about six shillings a week, and was not worth even that. Yet, in spite of his humble position, in less than three months from the time he joined the staff, his father-in-law, two brothers-in-law, and his first and second cousins, were mysteriously introduced to the firm's pay-roll,

AN UP-COUNTRY INDIAN VILLAGE, ONE OF THE SCORES OF THOUSANDS IN WHICH "QUACK" DOCTORS WORK THEIR "MAGIC" SPELLS AND WRECK THE HEALTH OF MILLIONS OF IGNORANT PATIENTS.

supplanting five men of a different creed. These newcomers, it is true, were placed in still more menial and worse-paid posts, but the important fact is that they got there. According to their standards, they had acquired affluence, and there is no doubt that a percentage of their earnings passed to the miracle-man who was able to read, as well as to other agents who must have been engaged in the transaction.

If the philosopher who declared that "all things in life are relative" had visited any office or works employing many Indians, he would have amended his statement to "all things in life are relatives".

The manager of a large printing-establishment in an up-country town discharged a Mahommedan compositor for slackness. Next morning, the overseer noticed a man at work whose face seemed familiar; in fact, he appeared to be strangely like the employee who had been "sacked". On being questioned, this compositor said he was the brother of the dismissed printer. Because whole families, as I have shown, have a knack of joining the same firm, and because the company employed many hundreds of men, this seemed quite normal, and nothing more was said for some weeks. Then, at a time of Hindu-Moslem tension, a Hindu who worked in the same premises gave some information to the manager. The Mahommedan was again interviewed. The truth came out. He was the discharged man, pretending to be his own brother! I am glad to say that he was allowed to remain chiefly as a tribute to his sense of humour.

This family job-finding craze is a great game, and I can testify to its enormous popularity. It is common

knowledge that the inferior grades among the larger companies, the railways, the municipal bodies, the Post Office and other Government services are honeycombed with "graft" and internal conspiracies.

It was my experience in India, that only one subject —namely, *swaraj*—inspired more letters to a newspaper than this topic of underhand job-mongering. On some occasions, I have been nearly overwhelmed by such communications, unfailing signs of the intense interest which Indians take in these literally intriguing matters.

Here is one masterly effort from a Government employee in the postal service who was apparently upset over some question affecting the appointment of himself or his friends. I reproduce it exactly as it came into my hands, suppressing only the writer's name and address lest they should cause that earnest soul embarrassment:

Sir,

We have to subject news to you publish in date 17th July 1928 inform of paper Civil and Military address came is No. SK Jumma I fee to peace is san over like them he.

And here is the item of news enclosed with this letter, which the writer presumably expected me to publish. It consisted of a copy of a communication

which the postal official had addressed to the Viceroy, and it ran :

The Viceroy,
Governor General, Council,
season Delhi,

Sir,

Is please view this paper from a new to stood have preferance as there to public faith to face on pass a same long distance to faith serve life, but question is reliable near on league Mohammadcan is compromise chances Umbala continued superintendent Mail Multan on sanction faith a view re-appoint request previous grant to sorter man view is Lahore.

I a man,

This delightful puzzle interested me greatly until I began to receive scores of others like it from so-called "literate" small-job men. In nearly every case, the writer, if a Mahommedan, sought to infer that a Hindu had received promotion which should have been enjoyed by a Moslem, such as himself, or one of his relatives. If a Hindu poured forth his soul on paper, it was the same thing reversed. All one had to do was to look for the words "Mahommedan" or "Hindu" amid the welter of syncopated syntax, glance at the signature,

and, behold! one could interpret these mysteries to one's colleagues with a real "my dear Watson" air.

Let it be noted, in passing, that the example of "English" which I have given came from a man who, no doubt, is officially included among India's "literates", especially as he is considered sufficiently advanced to hold a fairly responsible, though minor, Government post. Theorists who boast about the steady growth of education and the spread of literacy in India would suffer a shock if they realized how many millions of men with no better attainments than these murderers of language are cheerfully lumped among the twenty-six millions of people officially returned as being able to read and write. For the purpose of swelling the glad total, these muddle-brained men count as effectively as double-firsts from an English University.

Even if the whole twenty-six million were up to Classical Honours standard, they would still represent only about eight in every hundred of India's vast population.

It is true that the total of literates during the last sixty years has improved, in the case of men only, from nine millions in a population of 216 millions to approximately 22 millions in a population of about 320 millions. On the other hand, female literacy, which the Simon Commissioners look upon as a pivotal factor in regard to India's future (see Vol. I, pages 392 and 393 of their Report), has made almost no progress, despite self-sacrificing efforts by many workers in this heart-breaking field.

Sixty years ago there were two million women who could read; to-day, with a population vastly greater,

there are only three-and-a-half million similarly qualified.

The dead-weight of utter ignorance carried by the Dependency is something that has no parallel elsewhere. Sociologists might well stand aghast when confronted with the dramatic fact that India, while she is the fifth greatest trading country in the world, is, at the same time, the land where ninety-two persons in every hundred have insufficient education to sign their names.

Yet, paradoxical as it may sound, the eight literates in every hundred present a problem far greater, and create an anxiety much more acute, than anything arising directly from the undeveloped intellects of the ninety-two. The trouble is that, in so many cases, these so-called "educated" people are, in reality, not educated at all. The majority of them have no true knowledge beyond an awareness of what they call "political consciousness" and a desire to harvest as many rupees as they can for themselves and their families before the Great Unread also obtain a sufficient veneer of learning to qualify for entry to the same close preserve.

An example of this "veneer" occurs to me. A few years ago, a young proof-corrector who, like so many others in India, was a B.A. of a local University, found employment in a big newspaper office. It so happened that, in the notice of a new novel by William J. Locke, the reviewer had occasion to quote a passage referring to a wife's love for her intemperate partner or, as the author expressed it, "her sot of a husband". This was printed accurately in the first instance, and the editor himself passed the page as correct for the press.

Chota hazri (breakfast) the next morning was ruined for the editor, however. On looking through his paper, he found that the last letter in the word "sot" had now become a "d", which, to say the least of it, did not convey the sense of refinement which Locke invariably introduced into his novels.

At the subsequent office inquiry, the B.A. confessed that he altered the word after the final proof had been passed. What is more, he maintained that his revision was a definite improvement!

"I am sure of that," he declared proudly, "because, you see, I know English so well!"

On that basis, the interview could have only one outcome. The graduate is now "improving" the typography of an Indian-owned newspaper, and is, no doubt, able to make its literary style as distorted as its news.

Such things are typical of these "literates", even including the teeming University men. Many of them boast that they can talk fluently in six languages, but it does not seem to occur to them that it is of more practical value to be able to think clearly in one.

Thus it is that we have such instances as the pompous *babu* who swore in the witness-box that the time of a certain crime was "twelve o'clock as the crow flies!", or the equally eloquent case of the very "well-read" Bengali clerk who, when announcing his grandmother's death to his employer, solemnly stated: "Sahib, the hand that rocks the cradle has *kicked the bucket*!"

The problems arising from India's educational muddle are many and difficult. I pointed to some of them in articles contributed to *The Yorkshire Post*

during 1929. From one of these I extract the following :

"Anyone who has conducted a business in India, involving the employment of a staff recruited in that country, will agree that the handling of the scholastic question has produced one of the unholiest muddles imaginable. In Great Britain, we work from the elementary school upwards towards the University. In India, it would almost appear that, thanks to faulty organization and lack of true perspective at the outset, students take a short cut by plunging straight from their homes into the teeming Universities.

"I cannot say exactly what the curriculum of those institutions may be, but I do know that a young Hindu who once asked me for employment and volunteered to accept forty rupees a month (about fifteen shillings a week) was a Bachelor of Arts of a big University, was word-perfect in an entire act of 'The Merchant of Venice,' and knew the dates of all the fifteen Saxon kings of England ; but he had no idea of the humble functions of a comma, and he could not write enough English to address an envelope !

"Small-job men who choke the railway offices are mostly graduates. The official who counts the words on your telegram (oh, so slowly, if you are white, and like lightning, if you are not) is quite probably a Master of Arts. Printing establishments are full of such people, and many of them do work that would be done by the merest office-boy in England."

Some Gilbertian reactions have arisen from the glut of Indian B.A.s. I mentioned one of these in *The Sunday Sun*, during May, 1930, when I stated that

Bachelors of Art have become, so to speak, about six a penny. Their mental attainments are roughly equal to those of a Fifth Standard boy in England.

Indeed, they are such a drug on the market that I have received application for very junior journalistic posts written on notepaper headed by the applicant's name, and, underneath, in neat printing, the words *failed B.A.*, evidently inserted with the intention of conveying the idea that here was a youth of unusual intelligence, and well out of the common rut!

After this, I refuse to endorse the widespread idea that the Indian is without humour. The incident quoted is sufficient to show that, on the contrary, he has both a keen and a subtle appreciation of the ridiculous.

Nevertheless, although a sense of humour is among the saving graces of life, it cannot save him from the deplorable results of an appallingly widespread illiteracy.

This is not to say that India is a land without scholars and deep thinkers. Such an insinuation would be monstrously unfair. Any traveller in the East will meet Hindus, Mahommedans, Sikhs, and Buddhists of marked intellectual attainments—men whose conversation, based on obviously wide reading and study, is a sheer delight.

Many names leap to my mind—names like the Pandit Motilal Nehru, a great thinker, organizer and tactician; Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sir Shadi Lal, both pre-eminent in law; Sir Zulfiqar Ali Khan, a man of noble sentiments and ripe learning; the Maharajah of Bikaner, with the foreseeing mind and zeal of a

statesman; Mahatma Gandhi, dreamer and firebrand, whom I shall describe more fully later; Sir Sankaran Nair, a noted judge; Sir Ali Imam, a distinguished lawyer; Sir Albion Bannerji, once the Dewan of Mysore, and a most lucid exponent of Indian problems; Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, a constitutional expert; Rabindranath Tagore, among the immortals as a writer; Sir J. C. Bose, the marvellous scientist; the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, an ardent Nationalist, whose outstanding abilities must be respected; H.H. the Aga Khan, loyal ruler and great Mahommedan leader; H.H. the Maharajah of Patiala, a progressive administrator; the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri, orator, organizer, and fearless critic, whose work in South Africa will always be remembered; Rai Sahib Har Bilas Sarda, famous as the introducer of the child-marriage Bill already mentioned in this book; Sir Mohammed Shafi, noted Muslim leader; Dr. Abdulla Suhrawaddy, a brilliant Orientalist; Sardar Shivdeo Singh Uberoi, a versatile member of the Council of State; Sir Hari Singh Gour, a legal lion with razor-like mind and rapier-like tongue; and a host of others who have made their mark on India and will figure in the future progress of that country.

But the fact remains that the array of talent presented by such men as I have named, and by hundreds who are equally able, is all the more pronounced because it stands out in such startling contrast against two backgrounds.

In the near distance we have the quarter-educated, men who can read, after a fashion, but rarely think; and in the farther distance is the far-stretching mass,

reaching from ocean to ocean, of total, abysmal illiteracy.

No one could wish to deprive the really eminent Indian scholars of their due; but it is no discredit to them to say that, in many cases, less would be heard about them were they not so exceptional. They happen to be brightly-gleaming foils, seen more readily because of the darkness behind them.

Again, there is no thought of disparagement when I say that the world hears so much of the same leading Indians, over and over again, because they are, in comparison with the unbounded intellectual potentialities of this enormous country, so lamentably few. Thus, their names are continually in the newspapers and in the mouth of the public. Their eminence gains in proportion with this "damnable reiteration," to use a phrase attributed to the late Lord Northcliffe.

Were Indians in general even half so well educated as the average Englishman, we should have such a mass of ever-varying names, constantly meriting space in our newspapers, as the work of more and more men became entitled to public recognition, that some of the present leaders would be borne down in the scramble, and only those with the most lasting qualities would permanently remain at the top.

As things now are, a relatively few people, constantly doing and saying the same things, receive rather more public attention than that which they could legitimately claim if they lived in a more advanced country.

It was my lot, for some years, to be concerned with news regarding overseas leaders of thought, and I am inclined to agree with a witty editor who, after reading

many batches of speeches by political Indians, advised his reporters to prepare rubber-stamps of most of them, and thus save much time, ink and trouble!

Another friend of mine with a rather shrewd tongue and a great knowledge of the East once said: "All India is divided into three parts: the educated quarter; the quarter-educated; and the completely uneducated."

Here let me quote a letter which I received some time ago, dealing very cogently with this question. Its writer bears a name which is known and respected throughout the world, but, as he occupies a high official post of great responsibility, I cannot reveal his identity. He says:

> "As regards education, a good deal of our present troubles in India have their origin to a large extent in our own stupidities of omission and commission, due to politicians and theorists in England.
>
> "Macaulay started the game nearly 100 years ago with his creation of Universities. It is usual in most matters of life to attack first the foundation of the problem. Why, in the name of Heaven, Macaulay did not start by establishing elementary education on a sound basis in the first instance, then going on to Secondary and finally on to University education, for which India was certainly not ready at the time, has always been, and still is, unexplainable.
>
> "The result of the omission and the grievous blunder is that there are hundreds and thousands

of Indians now with, they suppose, University education—in reality about five in a thousand have any true education—all clamouring for jobs of a description which are non-existent, and never will be existent to the smallest fraction of them. Hence the Indian politician!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE CURSE OF "DR. DODO"—THE WORLD'S UNHEALTHIEST PEOPLE

EVERY year, in India, about six million people die from causes which are definitely preventable. Fevers, chiefly malaria, claim at least four millions of that ghastly total. *The needless wastage of human life is more than six times as great as the British losses during the whole of the European War.*

Yet Britain hears little about the wave of disease that constantly surges across the very heart of its Empire, slaying masses of men and women outright, and sapping the strength of those whom it does not kill, so that next year, or the year after that, they, too, shall be swept away.

The public says, when it reads a tiny paragraph quoting the figures from some ponderous blue book: "Pooh! It's only India, where the people always die like flies. What else can you expect?"

That is the worst of big figures. They are so vast that they become almost meaningless, something like a National Debt. Their crushing dead weight robs them of dramatic force.

But—think of it! *Six million deaths a year*, which need not have happened!

It is as if the entire population of Australia were

wiped out; as if that smiling Dominion were changed into nothing more than a graveyard.

Colonel H. A. J. Gidney, M.L.A., of Calcutta, president of the influential Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Association, made this striking statement in the Legislative Assembly during a debate in September, 1928, regarding the public health campaign in which *The Civil and Military Gazette* was then engaged:

> If the victims of these four million fever victims were placed side by side, *they would cover* 2,300 *miles, or extend the whole length of India.*

Can anything more appalling be imagined than a continuous line of corpses, stretching right across a continent? Yet, that is the price which the Dependency pays, in a single year, for malaria, a disease that can be, and should be, conquered.

But, again, this is "only India" and worth merely a few lines in the paper.

Still . . . what if it had been Europe?

Before me, as I write, is a printed page, bearing what I consider to be the saddest diagram in the world. It tells the most pathetic story to be found anywhere within the British Empire, for it is a tale of human suffering so vast, so intense, so dumbly borne and so needless, that the mind cannot at first grasp its horrible and full purport.

The diagram is incorporated in the most recently published (1930) annual statement chronicling events in India during 1928-29. This publication is prepared under the authority, and with the general approval, of

the Secretary of State for India, and it is issued by the Government Publication Branch in Calcutta. The diagram is quite a simple little affair, and yet how poignant and eloquent it is!

It consists merely of a circle which is split up, from its centre, into segments of various sizes representing, in their correct ratios, the respective objects to which the entire public expenditure of India was applied during the year. For instance, I see that "military services" account for by far the biggest proportion of expenditure, taking no less than 0.26 of the whole. Next come railways, with 0.15, while the debt services and the "police, gaols and justice" group is each responsible for 0.09 of the total.

Many other sections, ever diminishing in extent, are included, and, at last, the eye alights on the smallest of all. This is a segment so tiny that it is, by comparison, almost invisible, for with its modest ratio of 0.01, it occupies only a hundredth part of the circle.

Looking at it under a magnifying glass, I find that it represents the expenditure on public health!

For many years I have had through my hands figures regarding this subject, and they have often made me wonder why the Government of India has appeared to take such a wretchedly mercenary interest in starving the public health service, the one thing, above all others, that is free from any taint of politics, and is based entirely upon deep considerations of humanity.

One would imagine that here is a field in which money would be poured out without hesitation or stint—a field in which it would be possible to justify

even a so-called extravagance. But, no! This service remains, from the monetary point of view, the most neglected of all.

Whereas, years ago, I merely wondered at such anomalies, to-day I am aghast at them, for, in the interval, I have had excellent opportunities of studying the question on the spot. I have closely probed the almost unbelievable miseries and ill-health of the people. I have secured incontestable evidence of the abominable way in which the credulous and ignorant are exploited by the lowest type of "quack doctor". I have seen and heard things more grotesque than any fiction, more ludicrous than any comedy, more awful than any drama.

The stiffest fight of my life was that which was waged throughout the hot weather of 1928, when, through *The Civil and Military Gazette*, a mass of dreadful facts came to light. This war, which was aimed directly at the absolutely unscrupulous "witch-doctor" kind of quack, rather than against the comparatively conscientious, but nevertheless crude, *hakims* and *vaids* (Mahommedan and Hindu "doctors" respectively), had repercussions throughout India. It claimed the attention of even the purely "political" Legislative Assembly on more than one occasion; it wrung non-committal public statements and half-promises of future reform from Indian statesmen, reforms which, incidentally, have still to mature; it received considerable publicity in the greater newspapers of England; and, in the end, it caused *hakims* and *vaids*, to the number of 10,000 or more, to pass official resolution of "innermost hatred" towards myself and the paper which I was conducting.

Looking back over a considerable experience of

A TYPE OF SEMI-NAKED DEVOTEE WHO IS LOOKED UPON AS POSSESSING MUCH KNOWLEDGE OF POTENT HERBS AND OTHER STRANGE "HEALING" DEVICES.

public campaigns, I have never known one which resulted in such violent feeling on the one hand, and such shocking disclosures on the other.

The most dreadful instances, regarding which documentary evidence will be given later in this chapter, came to light, showing how the physical agony of India was being intensified, as it still is, for the monetary gain of foul wretches who should either be thrust into gaol or be debarred for evermore from practising their horrible "professions".

Exposures, most of them giving chapter and verse and backed by the writers' signatures, poured in upon me. Let me summarize just a few of them. Let it be remembered, too, that these scandals, despite the heroic efforts of a comparative handful of *qualified* doctors, both European and Indian, continue unabated to-day. Among other things it was shown that:

In one Province alone, namely Bengal, *babies are dying at the rate of more than a thousand a week from lockjaw*, due entirely to the filthy methods employed at confinements.

In the same Province a million-and-a-half people (or half as many again as all the Britons killed in the War) die every year.

Half of these deaths are those of children under 15.

One-fourth of this mortality was, in 1928, *preventable*, on the authority of Dr. C. A. Bentley, Director of Public Health, Bengal.

Cholera and malaria, between them, kill 470,000 Bengalis annually.

Consumption in the same Province accounts for approximately 100,000 victims each year, and enteric slays about the same number.

Nearly half-a-million of people, in this one area, are wiped out, every 12 months, by cholera and malaria, both of which diseases can, and should be, prevented.

The death-rate is highest in the villages, the very places where the charlatan "doctors" thrive most.

Alleged "sight-restorers" (not in Bengal alone but in many parts of the country) are blinding people by their horrible methods.

I know, personally, of a case in which a poor patient, suffering from an optical disease, had to endure, from a Hindu quack, *an application of cow-dung mixed with urine. The concoction was plastered into his eyes. He is now totally blind.*

There are recorded instances, in obstetric cases, revealing that the "juice of ass-dung" is being applied, on rotten rags, to the most sensitive part of a woman's body.

Branding with red-hot irons is a fairly common method of treating bronchitis and other chest complaints. Naturally, the patient, unless blessed with an exceptional constitution, dies, or he is sent in a hopeless condition, after such treatment, to a European-managed hospital, where the heroic officers of the Indian Medical Service are unblushingly blamed, by everyone with an anti-British axe to grind, for his inevitable death.

"Doctors" and "dentists" repair cycles, clocks and gramophones in their spare time.

Many of them are also sherbet and potato sellers They display, outside their shacks, on huge notice-boards, flaring announcements to the following effect :

"COME IN HERE AND BE CURED OF CONSUMPTION IN TEN MINUTES, MALARIA IN SIX MINUTES, AND PNEUMONIA IN FIFTEEN MINUTES."

The credulous who accept the invitation are given, at an outrageously profitable charge, pills attractively coated with silver, and containing either a little harmless chalk and alum, or some vile drug which could not possibly bring relief. Or, perhaps, they receive a worthless herb to be tied to a finger. Failing these things, they may get a scrap of paper on which is cyclostyled, in a most illiterate hand, some supposedly magic abracadabra.

One reputed "healer", a man whom I knew, was a menial employed in the unpleasant occupation of removing night-soil. At moments when he was not thus engaged, he cultivated a connection as a curer of Oriental sores, with a special "ointment". I shall not tell you what the ingredients were, but, in justice to this fellow, it ought to be placed on record that he certainly knew something about the subject inasmuch as he himself was covered with the most revolting specimens of the very things he proposed to heal.

Possibly the most shocking case of which I received details was that of a village *dhai*, or hereditary midwife, who, fuddled with toddy, and losing her patience because the "case" was stubborn, *finally rammed a glowing iron rod into the body of her patient, thus killing*,

at one and the same time, both the labouring mother and the unborn child.

In such circumstances as these can it be a matter for wonder that the six million annual deaths which I have already mentioned are commonly accepted as being only an *estimated* total. Probably, the true number is considerably in excess of this, but it will never be exactly ascertained until the whole public health system is drastically overhauled. To give only one example, the people of Bengal, in 1928, according to a speech made by Dr. Bentley, whose figures I have already quoted, recorded 1,200,000 deaths, whereas the real aggregate was known to be 300,000 more.

From inquiries which I have made, there is every indication that, owing largely to the vile methods of the quacks and the brutality and ignorance of village midwives, *at least one death in every four, taking India as a whole, is not registered or recorded in any way.*

Yet the authorities, faced by all this, confronted by the mass of torture endured by India's ailing millions—suffering so great that any reader would feel physically ill if he or she came into personal contact with it, as I have done—are presumably content to let the expenditure on health stand at the ridiculous ratio of a mere hundredth part of their Budget.

The item which should be far and away the biggest is, instead, the smallest!

If public necessity is to be accepted as the best guide to general policy, then it is clear that the Legislative Assembly, in this matter, is not exactly a centre of enlightenment.

So slight, in relation to the obvious demand, is the

supply of money for the preservation of human lives—not preservation merely by the rifle, tank and *lathi*, important as they are in keeping order, but by the exercise of real medical skill and sanitation—that the Assembly has not, even yet, considered it worth while to set up a separate Department of Health.

Britain, with a population of 44 millions, has a Ministry of Health, while medical and sanitary officers serve every district. India, with a population more than seven times as great, regards health with a different outlook.

The result is that the task of supervising the bodily welfare of the hundreds of millions who stretch across an entire sub-continent is not considered to be a whole-time job. That is a stewardship that is merely tucked away into a modest corner of a triple portfolio—the Ministry of Education, Health and Lands. Was there ever such a curiously blended anomaly ?

Here we have a country which, in veriest truth, is the Land of the Great Unread, the Great Unhealed and the Great Unsettled, and what happens ? Those specific and highly important interests of millions—their learning, their physique and their modest stake in the soil—are casually lumped together and thrown at the head of one Minister who is expected to have time to look after all three !

The Simon Commission has stated that it considers education to be a pivot of India's future. It has also declared (Vol. II, page 154) that "we are convinced that the improvement of public health in India . . . might be materially promoted if there were a wider central organization . . . whose business it would be to

encourage and co-ordinate the work that is so much needed in these directions."

That is only too true. Yet what is the attitude of the Assembly, obsessed, as it is, by purely factional politics ? In effect, it is as if these *swaraj*-seekers had declared, when discussing administrative plans : "Oh, bother ! Here is this problem of education, and we must also get someone to look after land questions. And, hang it all ! there is public health. Of course, it isn't really of a political nature, but we suppose we must keep an eye on it. An idea ! Let us make one job of the lot !" And thus we have that strange hybrid formation.

From personal experience, I know that, if there is one thing concerning which it is difficult to arouse the real interest of the Legislative Assembly as a whole, or the enthusiasm of the Provincial Governments, it is the terrible condition of public health. The trouble is that, to purely political minds, which run in subtle grooves, and consider most matters as a chess-board stratagem demanding a shrewd reply, this matter is much too clear-cut, simple and non-party.

Why ! if politicians truly took it to heart, and acted upon it, there might even be the risk of finding something upon which the whole House, Hindus, Moslems and all, would agree. And that would never do !

It is a pity that someone cannot introduce a dash of *swaraj* into this, as easily as chalk is introduced into malaria "cures" by the rascals behind the great quinine fraud, which I shall describe in the next chapter.

Meanwhile, the people perish.

The higher English authorities in India, those who

follow without much interference the activities of the Assembly and hold a sort of watching-brief in the wider interests of the Empire, adopt what is, no doubt, a strictly "official" and constitutionally proper attitude towards health. I have excellent reasons for knowing that they are strongly sympathetic, in their innermost hearts, towards the cause of the helpless masses. They know, quite well, that the secret of the storm which always descends on the head of anyone who seeks to hasten the advance of modern medical science in India is not so much the objection to the science itself, but simply the fact that it has Englishmen behind it.

They are perfectly aware that the health, or ill-health, of Indians is deeply rooted in the two systems of indigenous medicine, the Ayurvedic and the Unani; that is, the Hindu and the Mahommedan school respectively. These cults are thousands of years old. They are based on such a mass of ancient records and include such a multiplicity of remedies, chiefly herbs and drugs, that now and then, almost by chance, some admittedly excellent specific is encountered. It would be strange if it were not so.

In the past, these systems may have served India well enough. They have been adapted to the fatalistic Oriental view that, if a man dies, it is the will of Heaven, and, if he lives, it is the skill of the healer. Surgery is abhorrent to both cults. It is extraordinarily difficult to get an Ayurvedic *vaid* or a Unani *hakim*, as the respective practitioners are styled, to use the knife, although there are some wonderfully skilled surgeons among Indians who are fully qualified in the Western school of medicine, or allopathy, as its enemies love to call it.

Ayurveda, according to the many defences of it which have passed through my hands, appears to be founded upon the conception that *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*, or air, bile and mucus, are the basic elements of a man's physical state, while virtually all illnesses fall into one of two charmingly simple classifications—either "hot" or "cold".

Unani's keynotes are almost equally simple, and, in the main, equally ineffective when its principles are put into practice.

Religion and superstition are inextricably blended with the work of the *vaid* and *hakim*. In general, however, as there is a good deal of horse-sense in both systems and as their hereditary exponents are well able to take advantage of long experience and ordinary powers of observation, the methods employed, in the absence of anything better, are not without their useful points, in view of the extreme poverty and primitive outlook of the population. If they are not directly beneficial, they are comparatively innocuous.

The real curse of India is the vast army of wretched "quacks" ever hovering on the fringes of these systems without being definitely admitted into their inner circles. "Dr. Dodo", as this type of impostor came to be known throughout India a few days after I had given him that name, is a plague to the whole community. Strictly speaking, he is neither a *vaid* nor a *hakim*. He is simply a dangerous cheat.

His number is legion. He is everywhere. He is even in the great cities, where the people, having the resources of splendidly-equipped hospitals at their disposal, ought to know better than to encourage him.

But, chiefly, he is to be found in the rural villages which constitute the real India. It is there that he is at his deadliest.

His qualifications are absolutely nil. He may hold a diploma, but it will be a bogus document purchased at a nominal cost from one of the fraudulent so-called medical schools that exist all over India.

These "degrees" vary considerably in price. *The cheapest which was brought to my notice was a beautifully designed bazaar product, a bargain at three rupees, or four shillings and sixpence, a figure which compares very favourably with the much higher cost of entering the medical profession in Britain.* A wide range, in differing styles and colours, is available at anything between thirty shillings and two pounds!

There are tens of thousands of quacks who do not bother to invest even so little as that in their career. After all, what use is a piece of charming lithography in a village where not a solitary patient can read? Obviously, even the most attractive "lines" in diplomas would be wasted. So, they arm themselves with a miscellany of incantations and "spells", a few disgusting recipes into which cow-dung often enters, and, if one can be obtained cheaply, second-hand, a stethoscope. They have no idea what to do with this instrument, but they carry it for the sake of appearances.

I have evidence of one case in a Central Indian village where a young man lay terribly ill with malaria. The local "doctor" first felt his pulse by placing one end of a long rod on the patient's wrist and holding the other end himself. This, incidentally, is a much-favoured practice, the quack claiming that the throb of the pulse

is transmitted to him through the wood, even through a four-foot pole, and that he is able to diagnose any disease in this way. This is looked upon as being most remarkable (as, indeed, it is !) and the prestige of the charlatan is thereby enhanced.

The quack in question next produced a stethoscope which he applied to the man's big toe, muttering a few verses of a *mantra* (an incantation) while doing so. Looking wise, he declared that his victim was suffering from "too much heat". In that, he was not far wrong, since the poor fellow was nearly consumed by fever at the time of the examination. To adjust matters, he decided that the man must have "much cold". So he ordered him to lie in a stinking pool throughout the night, keeping only his head above the water and repeating, at intervals, a series of mystic words to drive away the "hot" evil spirit.

Next morning, the patient was in a fearful condition, shivering from head to foot. "Dr. Dodo" again went through his act with the pole and stethoscope (for showmanship is the only thing which he, like all his tribe, thoroughly understands), after which he solemnly pronounced that, this time, the man was suffering from "too much cold". To counterbalance this, he ordered him to lie out in the blazing sunshine stark naked.

After a few hours of that frightful ordeal, the victim, burning and shivering in turns, as is the way of malaria, was in extremis. The "doctor," on his return, found him at the shivering stage, and at once ordered more "heat". *The poor man was compelled to recline, still under the merciless sun, on a bed of hot ashes recently raked from a fire.*

No incantations could save him from the effects of so terrible a "cure". *Within an hour or so, he was dead.*

"Dr. Dodo" departed, having first collected his fee, which consisted of the young man's few rags of clothing. It was as well that he did so, perhaps, for, otherwise, they would have been the perquisites of the priest who officiated at the corpse's cremation.

Such are the ways of these "medical" swindlers. It would be impossible even to estimate the total number of deaths—not far removed from murders—for which they are directly responsible every year, but, taking into account the masses of fatal cases which go unregistered, I should imagine that the charlatans, through sheer ignorance and carelessness, cost India at least *a million lives annually*. Add to those the six millions who die each year from preventable diseases, and some idea of the appalling wastage of human life, under the British flag and in the twentieth century, can be obtained.

Instances of "Dr. Dodo's" ghastly methods could be quoted almost indefinitely. When I launched the 1928 campaign against him, I was overwhelmed with letters, some of the most amazing nature. They fell sharply into two categories—those which supported the campaign with reasoned arguments and conclusive facts, and those which were full of venomous personal abuse. Here it should be pointed out that, in the first section, a big proportion of the correspondents were Indian doctors, qualified according to European standards, and Indian medical students aspiring to gain such qualifications.

It is necessary to emphasize this point because there are still many people in Britain who have a prejudice

against Indian medical men and appear to harbour the idea that they are not really doctors at all. The notion is ridiculous. There are brilliant Indian doctors scattered throughout the Dependency. The chief trouble lies in two facts—first, that these competent men are so very few in relation to the crushing weight of sickness, and, second, that they are so hopelessly outnumbered by the rascally quacks who batten on the agonies and superstitions of the very poor!

The credit for firing the first shot in the battle of 1928 must go to a distinguished member of the Indian Medical Service, who publicly criticized a monetary grant made by the Lahore Municipality to popularize and encourage the Indian indigenous systems of medicine, roundly described by him as "a brutal farce". I gave his remarks considerable prominence; then I followed them with an article comparing the "quacks" with medicine-men in the Congo swamps; and the gloves were off.

From the documents with which I was bombarded, I am able to quote a selection by the courtesy of *The Civil and Military Gazette*. These extracts do not represent a thousandth part of the facts which came to my knowledge during the months when the fight raged; indeed, many of those details are far too horrible to be printed anywhere outside a purely medical publication.

Here are some of the signed statements regarding the myriad activities of "Dr. Dodo", who, according to official figures, is the sole medical attendant of at least nine-tenths of India's population. In every case where the name and address are not printed, these were given originally by the writers:

"Hardly a day passes without our coming across cases which have suffered terribly at the hands of *hakims* and *vaids*.

"Only two days ago, I saw a young girl with both eyes blinded and beyond hope of recovery, as a result of the use of some extremely irritating medicine prescribed by one of the practitioners of these 'systems.' And I have seen dozens of others in the same condition."

"But this is a funny country. We know a famous proprietary preparation, a cure-all which is greatly advertised. There is a street named after it, and there is a post office named after it."

M. R. SAWHNEY, B.A., M.B.B.Bc. (Cantab.),
Lahore.

"A *vaid* in my neighbourhood asked me to endorse an application that he had written for a regular post in vaidship which he was under the impression was being created here.

"When asserting in the letter that he was a *vaid*, he wished to make assurance doubly assured, and so he followed the word by another in parenthesis. This other word was *quack*!

"He was more honest than he knew.

"Yesterday, while discussing this subject with an Indian friend who suffers from deafness in one ear, he told me how, once, one of those well-intentioned gentlemen had persuaded him to go in for a 3-anna 'infallible cure for deafness.' My friend sorely regretted it. The immediate result was excruciating pain, and he had to be treated forthwith by a qualified medical man who became fifteen rupees the richer."

NORAH RICHARDS,
Palampur.

"It is not difficult to appreciate the contempt for *a huge army of Indian quacks* whose colossal ignorance of medical knowledge is second only to the ignorance of their patients."

S. M. HAQ, B.A., LL.B.,
Amritsar.

"To convince the layman of their knowledge, and to show them that they also had the knowledge of a qualified doctor, the *hakims* and *vaids* have used stethoscopes. Several patients have told me that these 'doctors' diagnosed a tumour in the leg by means of a stethoscope!

"I have myself seen many of the street *vaids* using a stethoscope on the extremities! Patients have told me that a thread has been tied to a bracelet worn by a woman in *purdah* and that the other end of the thread was then passed through to another room where the *hakim* held it and thus diagnosed the disease of a patient whom he could not even see!"

C. D. PASI,
Lahore.

"I, for one, believe that 75 per cent. of the Indian people who die, die because of these 'quack' doctors. Ignorance leads thousands to the grave through the agency of the local *hakim* or *vaid*."

A DOCTOR,
Dalhousie.

"Like many other doctors I have come across several cases permanently damaged by quacks. On February 19th, 1925, a clerk's wife fell ill and was treated by me. She was suffering from ptomaine poisoning. As the husband, who was a graduate and an employee of an oil company, was getting a good salary and could afford it, I sent for the Civil Surgeon who confirmed the diagnosis. We tried our best, but, unfortunately, the woman died. She was pregnant.

"I declared her dead at 4 a.m. on February 20th. While the burial arrangements were being made, somebody, apparently an agent of the quacks, made a suggestion to the husband that his wife was not dead. He also said that the child was living.

"The husband came to me with others and asked me to cut open the woman and save the child. I showed them the signs of death as given in the forensic medicine book and

challenged them to prove otherwise. I suggested calling a couple of doctors to certify the death.

"Instead of that, cars were sent to get some *hakims*. Meanwhile, the dead body was covered with cupping glasses, one after the other.

"Huge crowds collected both in and outside the house, and the whole camp was aroused to hear the news. At about 3 p.m., two *hakims*, one a young man who is an eminent figure in Rawalpindi, and uses a stethoscope and a thermometer, and the other an old man with 40 years' practice, arrived.

"The husband wanted me to accompany them, but I refused.

"They examined the body and declared that the woman was dead *and that she died on account of the child catching the heart of the mother tightly with one of his hands.*

"What a poor knowledge of anatomy they have! They further declared that the child had died too.

"The crowds then condemned the *hakims* as well as the action of the husband."

DR. BEHARI LALL TREHUN,
Rawalpindi.

"There are pills advertised with the claim that *they will change an unborn girl into a boy*!

"Thousands of such quacks are let loose upon the ignorant public. There is no law to check or control them.

"Other quacks who have been only partially educated, spend Rs. 25 to Rs. 50 to get some M.B. or M.D. degree from some other quack who deals in them, and they begin to call themselves, and sign themselves, 'doctors'.

"One of these 'doctors' got into trouble and was asked by the authorities why he was styling himself a 'doctor'. He replied: 'I am not cheating the public, sir. My mother named me as "doctor". It is a part of my name.' He was a born doctor!

"Still other quacks give preparations which keep off evil spirits. They spit or blow into the water. *The patient*

drinks it. I have seen this 'therapeutic' measure being adopted for curing patients of malaria, boils, and many other diseases.

"Ayurveda has no anatomy, no physiology, no pathology, no pharmacology. The anatomy of Sushrata is without brain, without spinal cord, and without heart and pancreas.

"I give below an extract from Sushrata Chakitsa Sthan (Treatment Section, Kunj Lal's Translation, 2nd Edition, page 377) as a sample of the treatment these quack doctors employ:

" 'Powdered dung of a camel, mule or an ass should be given to the patient for food.' "

PREM NATH, B.A.

Among other documents, here is an interesting sidelight upon Mr. Gandhi:

"We all remember how Mr. Gandhi abominated Western surgery and medicine, calling hospitals 'institutions for propagating sin' and all that sort of thing.

"Then there came a pain in his side, the I.M.S. surgeon diagnosed appendicitis, and advised an immediate operation; but, out of consideration for the patient's well-known hatred for all things Western, he offered to call in an Ayurvedic practitioner.

"Mr. Gandhi was then at the height of his influence and one does not doubt that the most skilled and famous *vaids* would have been proud to attend him. Did Mr. Gandhi fly to the 'ancient culture' which now surely had a unique opportunity of vindicating its methods in the eyes of the whole world?

"He did not! All he desired was an operation by a man who knew his job, and so an English surgeon operated, and the patient made a good recovery in a hospital run on scientific lines."

N. H.,
Lahore.

WHETHER OR NOT AN INDIAN HAS MUCH MONEY OR FOOD, HE CAN OFTEN DO THIS IF HE LIVES NEAR A LAKE. THIS MAN IS CATCHING FISH BY THE SIMPLE METHOD OF PUSHING A TRIDENT-SHAPED SPEAR INTO THE WATER AND THEN QUICKLY PULLING OUT AN IMPALED FISH.

Here is a further selection of eloquent extracts:

"Unfortunately, the present *vaids* and *hakims*, without exception, rely upon the credulity and blind faith of the public and hide their 'potent' medicines in the secret chambers of their minds. They understand little of the human body, and still less of the diseases it suffers from."

N. R. DHARMAVIR, F.R.C.S., D.P.H., L.R.C.P. (Eng.)
Lahore.

"My bearer's child was very ill with bronchitis. I begged him to take it to the hospital, and said I would myself come and see everything was done for it. Next morning he appeared weeping bitterly, and said the child was dead.

"He explained that he had taken it to a *hakim*, who had *branded it on the chest with a hot iron. The child had had a convulsion and died of shock.*

"A second case was an old man I noticed looking very ill, at the hospital. I asked him what was the matter. He was suffering from pneumonia, but had been so badly branded with hot irons (by the *hakim*) on the stomach, that it was doubtful if he could live, and the hospital would be blamed for his death."

MEMSAHIB,
Murree.

"We are told that there exist *vaids* in our country who feel the pulse and tell you the diet you took the previous night, and that diseases can be diagnosed by a mere look at the face.

"Red pepper tied to the index finger immersed in water before an expected attack of malaria was a remedy put forward by a *hakim* at a *Tibbia* conference in Madras a few years ago."

P. S. BARSALV,
Lahore.

"I live in a village and have come across several cases permanently damaged by so-called *vaids* or *hakims*. A *hakim* poured a certain oil on a fracture with the consequence that the patient was disabled for life. *He also used a heated sickle as a cure for stone and enlarged spleen*, and I actually saved a boy from his clutches."

SODHI AUTAR SINGH, RAIS OF SULTAN KHANWALA,
Ferozepore.

"About 3 years ago a *vaid* of 35 years' standing, when it was explained to him from a diagram in his book, that nerves convey sensory and motor functions, said: 'No, they carry blood. There are no such things as nerves in the body.'"

CHIRANJI LAL,
5th Year Medical Student.

A signed statement by Pandit Thakur Datta Sharma, of Amritdhara, one of the most noted *vaids* in the Punjab, contained four remarkable and definite assertions. He wrote:

"I put before you the following cases in which Western science is powerless, and should be glad for them to be investigated by any committee Western science may care to appoint. If my assertions are proved untrue, I will stand by the verdict.

"1. In case of rickets, an ointment, when rubbed on the back of the child, will make small thin worms or insects come out. What has Science to say to this?

"2. Tertian fever (malaria) is abated if a remedy is simply tied to one of the patient's fingers. Let Science prove this for itself.

"3. Wounds in cattle infected by worms are cured and cleared of the worms simply by tying a herb upon the horn of the beast. Can Science explain this?

"4. In cases of fever we put a *surma*, or powder, in the right eye of the patient. In this way fever is driven out of the right side of the body. When the powder is applied to the left eye, the fever will leave the left half of the body.

"Has Science any means of proving why this is true? Ayurveda can perform scores of such miracles, but who will believe in them?"

A statement received from a prominent man signing himself "Observer" quoted the following extract, dealing with the indigenous systems of medicine from "The Medical Profession in India", by Major-General Sir Patrick Hehir, I.M.S.:

"One of the principles is that diseases are the result of the operations of evil spirits, who have to be pacified by various offerings and propitiated by incantations.

"Regarding the diseases of children, it is stated that 'these are due to the action of certain spirits, who were belated in obtaining lucrative posts in the retinue of the Destroyer, and were compelled to secure power, to tax sorrowing parents who might have committed any of the hundred odd ritual faults, by afflicting their offspring.'"

"Observer" added:

"To the ordinary mind it seems inconsistent that, while an individual who connives at the murder of another individual is held guilty of abetment, a Government that claims to be civilised should legalise and encourage wholesale murder in response to an artificial demand.

"If this is an example of what may be expected from the working of the Reforms, it is possible that, in due course, we may see the legalisation of *suttee* and female

infanticide as being authorised by religion and in accordance with ancient customs.

"And after all, the victims of *suttee* and female infanticide would be a negligible quantity in comparison with the number claimed by the quacks."

Raja Ram, sub-assistant surgeon of Nankana Sahib, related the following remarkable account of a *hakim's* "remedies" which tortured a patient to death :

"Lately a man was brought to me from an adjoining village for the treatment of pain, swelling of the abdomen, and fever. On examination, I found that his pulse was imperceptible and the abdominal wall was extensively bruised.

"On inquiry, I was told that a village *hakim* wanted to apply cups to his abdomen. As proper earthen cups (*kujas*) were not available, an earthenware *tind* was unfastened from the gear of a well, kerosene oil and rags were burned inside the vessel and it was applied to the abdomen when the flames were extinguished. The result was that, the mouth of the vessel being very wide, the abdominal contents were pulled into the *tind* to such an extent that the pain increased terribly, and the *tind* could not be removed from the abdomen.

"The poor *hakim* was helpless, but a village schoolteacher broke the *tind* and thus saved the patient from terrible pain.

"But the treatment had done its deadly work, and the patient died a few hours after his arrival at the hospital.

"Are such men healers or torturers ?"

I now give an interesting sidelight both on Indian history and on Indian quackery, from Ram Singh, of Patiala :

"It is a well-known fact that Dr. Gabriel Broughton cured Princess Jahanara, Emperor Shah Jehan's daughter. He was called from Surat at the last moment when all the

learned *vaids* and *hakims* had pronounced her case hopeless despite potent medicines such as '*jiwan buti*', which were supposed even to revive the dead.

"When told to ask for anything he wished as a reward, Dr. Broughton obtained for the English permission to trade in India free of *shahi* tax. In its wider sense, he thus established British rule in India."

From another pile of statements sent to *The Civil and Military Gazette* I select the following :

"I belong to a place where quackery is very rife, and where *two out of every four women in confinement pass straight into the grave*. Infant mortality is appalling. All this is due to quacks.

"Here is a case I have seen. A patient was suffering from an extensive wound in the back and a *jarrah* (unskilled surgeon) was called in. He stuffed the wound with a dirty cloth soaked in *iter* (an Indian perfume) to mask the evil smell. The result was the man succumbed."

BEHARILAL MALHOTRA,
Final Year Medical Student,
Murree Hills.

"The workaday methods of the busy, modern doctor have little of the mysterious atmosphere that engenders a state of mind in his patient favourable to the reception of potent suggestion. Who is in a better position to create such an atmosphere than the picturesque and mysterious *hakim*, who, with his blue and yellow pills, and his ceremonials and incantations, can reduce his ignorant patient to a wondering state of awe, believing that everything is possible to the magic of this man's potions ? The patient is cured by suggestion."

J. KIDMAN COX,
Dalhousie.

"Science is international and knows no distinction between knowledge first discovered in the West or in the East.

"Western medical practitioners are always ready to accept new knowledge, new ideas and medicines previously unknown to them, provided the action and therapeutics of such medicines are carefully studied and verified.

"I wish it were equally true of the *vaids* and *hakims*."

B. L. BHATIA,
Principal,
Government Inter. College,
Hoshiarpur.

"It will have to be admitted that there are more than 90 per cent. of quacks without proper knowledge of the Ayurvedic and Unani systems. They become big *kavirajs* and *hakims* through advertisements and propaganda, the most undesirable and degrading practice in the noblest of all professions.

"Their methods are not unknown; they have found the elixir of life; they have a panacea for all ailments; they can cure diseases in five minutes and they can perform all sorts of miracles.

"Such people are a disgrace to the profession. They must go. The profession must get rid of them. A well-known *jarrah* cut the radial artery of a person in performing an operation.

"A tubercular joint was spoiled and the patient crippled by another *jarrah*.

"A *hakim* caused death by giving a hypodermic injection of normal saline, with a non-sterilised syringe, in a case of cholera.

"A case of abscess of the liver was treated as simple congestion till the abscess became unoperable and the patient died.

"It is desirable that the Government should be moved in this matter to protect the public. The question is—should these people be allowed to play with the lives and health of the public so ruthlessly?

"Papers which style themselves Nationalist are doing the greatest harm to their country and to the nation by taking up the cause of such brutes. They should make their position clear and should denounce quackery in every form."

FAZAL ELAHI, M.B., B.S.,
Sialkot.

"Many years ago a relation of mine had an abscess of the tongue. The *hakim* who treated him gave a long prescription of various herbs, a decoction of which was given him to drink for a number of days. It, of course, did him no good. The abscess went on swelling, so much so that there did not remain space enough for the swollen tongue in the open mouth, and it protruded.

"The patient could not eat or even drink anything. The *hakim* applied about 100 leeches on his back and under the ears. These, too, did him no good. The *hakim* then opened his arm-veins twice. Still there was no relief. The patient became faint through the loss of blood.

"The *hakim* then gave him up as a hopeless case.

"The patient was then taken to the late Major Arthur Neve, who took a lancet out of his pocket case and made a little opening under the patient's chin and a large quantity of pus came out.

"The swelling was now gone and the tongue resumed its normal shape, and went into its place. In a couple of days the man recovered."

ANAND KOUL BANZAI,
Srinagar.

Light is thrown on the sale of bogus degrees by the following letters, one of which, it will be noted, is from a prominent member of the Ayurvedic cult and another from a *hakim* :

"There exists a large number of nominal 'colleges' or 'schools', some of them being night-colleges, which, with or without teaching, award bogus diplomas in every part of India.

"Worse than these are the individuals, medical or non-medical, who grant any degree by snatching a fee for their pockets from any worthless or uneducated wretch."

PT. SURENDA MOHAN, B.A.,
Principal,
Dyanand Ayurvedic College,
Lahore.

"'Quackery' nowadays prevails throughout India on a very big scale. A large number of unqualified ignorant men, having bogus diplomas, are practising everywhere. They advertise in thundering words and entrap the patients.

"In every city and town of India, there are quacks, who gather crowds around them and deliver lectures.

"They know several effective means of attracting attention. Some of them bring snakes with them; others show tricks with cards or tell interesting stories.

"They cheat the people by selling them medicines (of their own concoction) in a very astonishing and ridiculous manner. Their medicines, instead of giving any cure, produce great harm, as they themselves do not know the effects of them.

"They sell one phial of medicine as a cure for scores of diseases."

HAKIM SYED ZAFARYAB ALI (Haziq-ul-Hind),
Medallist, Tibbia College, Delhi.

"There is in the Punjab a so-called University, which not only sells bogus degrees itself to non-qualified people after bogus examinations, but is also arranging for its branches to issue degrees after receiving the spoils.

"This 'University' has no school or college anywhere, but, still, it is a 'University'!

"The ignorant and poorly educated people are cheated by the word 'University'."

ABDUL MAJID KHAN,
Schoolmaster,
Lahore.

"Dr. Dodo only works on three theories :

"1. If he can't diagnose a case he says there is 'heat inside' !

"2. Liver derangement is the label for all abdominal troubles.

"3. In cases of old standing fevers he says *torki* of *mubarki* have 'gone in'.

"The following is a typical example : Last week a child was brought to me, and the laboured breathing and laryngeal group pointed to throat trouble. I asked the mother how long the child had had throat trouble, and she replied : 'No, doctor, the child has only got his *torki* gone in, as diagnosed by the *hakim*. He never had throat trouble.'

"I examined the throat and I found it to be a typical case of diphtheria. I prescribed medicine, etc., and informed the mother that it would be fatal unless treated that night. Unfortunately, the innocent child died next morning untreated.

"This glaring incident is also before me. A man came to me in the early stages of erysipelas of the nose. I urged injections, warning him of the consequences of neglect. But he consulted the great *hakim*, under whose treatment he remained for four days. Finally I was recalled and found him comatose. I certified his death three or four hours later.

"Why should so many so-called qualified *hakims* use stethoscopes (by which they cheat the patients by applying to the patients' heads for headache) when they claim that they can diagnose cases in three minutes by simply feeling the pulse ?

"I have actually seen a case of threatened miscarriage treated by a qualified *hakim* with a vaginal plug of a dirty piece of cloth soaked in the juice of ass-dung."

'S. Dilawar Ali Shah, M.B., B.S.,
Lahore.

"I give four examples of the remedies, or 'miracles', as they are called, practised by quacks.

"A few months ago, a patient was admitted into the Mayo Hospital who had dislocation of his left hip-joint. Before his admission to the hospital he had been the victim of the treatment of a quack who had advised him to apply a newly killed chicken on the joint every week.

"Another quack boasts that snake and rabid dog bites can be cured with certainty by *eating clay*.

"Another believes that *rat meat* is a specific remedy for tubercular glands.

"The fourth example is a quack who treats every inflammatory disease of the eyes by besmearing the eyelids with curd (*dahi*) *and then letting loose a dog to lick it.*"

S. A. GHAFUR,
Dalhousie.

[Finally, here is a shrewd study of the worse type of *hakim*, received from a qualified Indian doctor.]

"The *hakim* is a jack-of-all-trades. He is a clerk in some office, a petition writer, an indigenous drug vendor, or a paid intermediary in business and quarrels, but, in spite of this multiplicity of vocations in life, he, somehow or other, saves time to mend fountain-pens and watches.

"Many a time, when you go to the city, you find notices put upon shops: 'Hakim-ul-Hukama, specialist', in this and that and the other, and then in smaller print you read: 'Fortunes are told and futures are also read here.'

"And how has our friend learnt this business? The great-grandfather of the *hakim* happened to be a very pious fellow, so much so that he became one of God's chosen few, and one night, when he was roaming in the realm of dreamland, he either heard a voice which came from nowhere, or perhaps saw a venerable gentleman in green, his face lit up with godliness, a staff in his hand, deep in meditations, who at his approach thus spoke:

" 'Peace be on thee, my son! God has blessed thee and

opened unto thee the fountains of medical learning. Go thou, and be a blessing to the sick in their misery.'

"And lo! his eyes opened, the dingy room was aglow with some mysterious light and fragrant with some peculiar perfume.

"The bewildered *hakim* got up, but found himself a changed being. He could now diagnose a case, even if the only connection between him and his patient were this, that he held one end of a string, the other end of which was tied to the patient's wrist.

"He wrote down all this ultra-human knowledge somewhere, which has been handed down from father to son from time immemorial.

"Our *hakim* claims to *reunite an amputated limb by the application of his medicine*, and somehow or other gets some 'reliable' eye-witnesses of the accomplishment, too.

"In the gangrenous stumps, fingers sprout up afresh, and one drop of the medicine in the eye makes the stars visible at midday—such is the potency of the drug.

"And the *hakim* is not without qualification. In fact he has such a profusion of them, that he can hardly find a board large enough, and must have one nearly as large as his shop.

"At one shop I have read, besides other things: 'Late S.I. to the Government of India.'

"I could not make out what that signified, but on making inquiry, I was told that the gentleman, previous to his being baptised a *hakim*, was a sub-inspector in the police service.

"A *hakim* does not usually limit himself to his own drugs, but makes secret encroachments on the Western pharmacopœia.

"He pounds quinine tablets, adds something to give them a new colour, and finally coats them with silver leaves. When dispensing to his patients, he exclaims with great pride: 'Here you see my substitute for quinine, and the beauty about the thing is, that it is nice and cold as it should be for a patient in a feverish condition.'

"Next he proceeds with a smile of triumph to proclaim the foolhardiness of the doctors who prescribe such a hot thing as quinine to a patient who is so hot already."

M. M. SIDDIQ HUSSAIN, M.B., B.S.,
Gujrat.

India, if we are to believe her politicians, prides herself upon her civilized state. Should an Englishman dare to criticize the actions and outlook of any of her leaders, he is commonly met with the remark: "Look at our ancient culture! Think of our philosophies which were established thousands of years ago! We were an advanced people when the forefathers of Britons were yet savages!" That is true enough, but it applies only to one end of the scale and concerns merely a tiny fraction of the jumble of races comprising India. It takes no account of the crushing load of ignorance, poverty and superstition borne by the ordinary people of the country. It forgets—or does not want to remember—that, for every vocal agitator, there are a hundred thousand average Indians, mostly tillers of the soil, who are dumbly enduring the miseries and impositions described in the foregoing documents.

And, strangest of all, the sophists cling to the assumption that "medical" systems are necessarily good because they are old. Science may advance as it pleases in other countries, relieving human pain everywhere, but Ayurveda and Unani, being founded upon sacred writings, must not be altered in any detail to meet the ever-changing needs of modern times. It is an arrogant assumption, but it has been seriously presented to me, on scores of occasions, by Indians who were well educated in other respects.

Thus it is that a grim panorama of pain continues to stretch across a continent. Thus it is that only a hundredth part of each rupee of public expenditure can be spared for the relief of the greatest mass of suffering which exists under the British flag to-day.

These facts should be emblazoned across the world until they strike deep into the hearts of men—until they shame the authorities, both in India and at home, into a better and more humane sense of proportion. Our huge Dependency can never be a really worth-while or happy country until it is made reasonably healthy. The condition of the public physique and sanitation is by far the most unworthy and shameful thing in our Eastern Empire to-day. This, as I have sought to show, is largely due to the "witch-doctor" element. "Dodo" and all his tribe must go—and go quickly.

Even among the men of low intellect who constitute some of the wholly criminal tribes in the Madras Presidency, the murderous quacks have been neatly weighed up. For instance, the Kuraver people, belonging to a robber-caste, have a saying which runs: "He who has killed a thousand patients is nearly a doctor."

"Dr. Dodo" has long passed that stage. Millions are dying needlessly every year. He is not "nearly a doctor". He is a disaster.

CHAPTER IX

AMONG THE DRUG-FAKERS

ANYONE in India can be a chemist. In that capacity, he can peddle poisons and dangerous drugs to the content of both his heart and his pocket. All he need do is to hire some tumbledown shack in a bazaar, lay in a stock of gaudy bottles, look as learned as possible, and—behold!—he is a chemist, or pharmacist, or whatever he might care to style himself. It is more than likely that he knows nothing, and cares less, about the purity or potency of the nostrums which he dispenses. His sole aim is to gather a harvest of rupees before India awakes to the fact, as she surely must, that the law on this matter requires to be tightened up. That day, however, may yet be distant. As in the case of the quack "Dr. Dodo", whose activities are described in the preceding chapter, this question lacks the attractive spice of strictly communal or party agitations.

It is so much easier, and, to the Indian mind, so much more satisfactory, to parade the streets with banners proclaiming "Down with the Simon Report! Out with the British!" than it is to organize a drive against a spurious drug that might be endangering the lives of the processionists even while they are shouting their slogans.

From the point of view of the bogus chemist, who

swarms throughout India, that is exactly as it should be. He does not want the British to remain indefinitely, because, one of these days, they might bring about reforms which would put him out of business. Perhaps he has read somewhere that tiny countries like Switzerland or Finland—pocket-handkerchief lands compared with the vast domains of India—have Food and Drugs Acts which effectively cut the claws of money-grabbers who dabble in perilous things that they do not understand. India, with her "ancient culture", has not reached that practical stage yet, though the Council of State, years ago, gave a plain hint that the matter should receive attention. True, the question has been discussed casually on two or three occasions in the Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Councils. But, invariably, some welcome opportunity has arisen whereby so awkward a subject could be neatly fobbed off.

As for the more extremist leaders, how could one expect them to spare the necessary time, in days already heavily occupied in plotting and counter-plotting, to transfer their energies to a topic like this ? It is nothing to them if an engine-cleaner blossoms overnight into a poison-seller or if—to quote a case of which I know—a menial office-worker, with just enough intelligence to distinguish colours and to read addresses with infinite labour, suddenly becomes an "expert" compounder of potent blue pills, the transformation having been effected by the simple process of throwing up his wretched post and buying a fourpenny pair of big horn-rimmed spectacles. In such a way does a callow youth become a pharmacist. An apothecary for fourpence !

Imagine the perils attending such a situation. Men

engaged in the most varied occupations have turned their attention to this profitable business. Railway firemen, ticket-collectors, street loungers, domestic servants, cooks, hawkers, cycle-fitters, camel-dealers, and even the humblest sweepers have barricaded themselves behind the large coloured bottles, the pills, the ointments, the powders and potions of their newly-adopted "profession".

That they make money there cannot be the slightest doubt. The secret of that is adulteration, open and unabashed and, yet, comparatively safe in a country where not one customer in a hundred could read the over-ornamented two-colour labels. How, then, could such patrons ever attempt anything in the nature of a chemical analysis to discover that they have been cheated?

Trade thrives enormously in such circumstances. Everything plays into these "professional" gentlemen's hands. What else could be expected in a land covered by the pain-strewn trail of the quack doctors whose odious ministrations extend to nine-tenths of the population? When so-called "healers" definitely recommend their patients to eat clay as a specific for disease, it is obvious that an "apothecary" need not be over-scrupulous either about the quality or the intrinsic nature of the ingredients that pass through his unskilled hands. The profit on little lumps of clay, if retailed in neat packets at, say, sixpence each, must be quite pleasing.

It is probable that these factors provide one of the reasons why every attempt to abolish these bogus chemists and to ensure the purity of drugs and medicines by enacting that no one but fully qualified men shall

HE LOOKS RATHER LIKE A SAINT, BUT HE HAS BEEN A BRIGAND CHIEF IN NORTHERN INDIA, AND HE THINKS OVER THE MANY COUPS HE HAS MADE.

be concerned in their sale, has always aroused a storm of protest from highly-interested quarters. This howl of rage (and here I write from experience, having been intimately concerned in evoking an excellent example of it) takes a rather stereotyped form. The sham pharmacists invariably allege that the desire to restrict their activity is due solely to an ambition by the wicked white man to create a monopoly in drugs and proprietary medicines of his own manufacture. No credit is ever given for the possession of a genuine desire to ease the sufferings of the poor Indian whom the drug-faker first robs and then tortures. To sell worthless, and even harmful, remedies to a disease-ridden man at a shameful profiteering price is surely both robbery and torture.

The most effective instance of this is the great quinine fraud which was exposed two years ago. I shall always look back with pleasure at the part which I was privileged to take, with the assistance of an excellent and loyal newspaper-staff, in telling the public the facts about this appalling swindle. It was a matter which affected, and still affects, millions of people throughout India, a malaria-stricken land where it is, above all things, necessary that quinine, the sovereign remedy for this disease, should be of the highest possible quality.

Yet the bazaars of the country were then glutted, and are to-day, with fraudulent quinine tablets composed almost entirely of common chalk with a trace of alum to give them a bitter taste. I have personally bought specimens at random and in widely scattered places. All of them, on being analysed by expert European chemists, were found to be absolutely worthless. In most instances, the quantity of quinine was microscopic.

In one case, there was none, although the package was made up in such a way as to be identical with that used by a world-famous London firm of export chemists.

Millions of Indians, suffering as only the victims of malaria can suffer, buy this rubbish in the belief that it will bring them relief. Instead, it brings nothing but more profit to the cycle-fitter chemist and premature death to his client.

The four million people who, as I have already stated, are needlessly slain every year by malaria, spell fortune for these chalk-pedlars, and, unless drastic action is taken, it is apparent that so rich a vein may never be worked out.

According to the representative of an eminent English firm—a man who has travelled extensively in the East—Indian-owned drug establishments are flooded with specious chemicals. "A deliberate fraud," was the description which this expert applied to specimens of quinine tablets bought at such places.

To make matters still worse, these bogus products have been bought, as I established at the time, by district boards and municipalities in large quantities *for distribution to dispensaries and charitable institutions*! That is surely the irony of ironies!

The exposure to which I have referred aroused enormous interest throughout India. The campaign in *The Civil and Military Gazette* was supported by additional disclosures by the influential *Statesman* of Calcutta. Some pointed questions were asked in the Assembly, chiefly by Colonel H. A. J. Gidney, who produced bottles of the spurious material as well as Government analysts' reports and manifestoes from

important commercial bodies. On more than one occasion, Ministers spent some uncomfortable moments, but the most that could be obtained from the House was a vague statement that the question would be referred to the various Provincial Governments, any further action depending upon the views of those bodies. Thus, the matter was adroitly shelved for a further period.

When the fraud was first brought to the notice of the Assembly, as a question of urgency, a very curious view was taken. The motion was actually ruled out by the President on the ground that it could not really be urgent inasmuch as requests to deal with the matter had been made more than a year-and-a-half previously! Pursuing that argument to its logical conclusion, a scandal becomes less a scandal the longer it continues! When the health, and even the lives, of millions are at stake, it is difficult to understand such a viewpoint.

Meanwhile, the charlatan "chemists" continue to thrive. They are men who, as I have shown, have never received any training or passed any examination to ensure that they are fit to engage in a calling which demands wide knowledge, scrupulous care, and a high sense of rectitude.

It was revealed, not long ago, that a sample of ergot, a drug extensively used in confinements, and on which a mother's life might often depend, was so extensively adulterated that it was absolutely inert.

Quinine and ergot are not the only substances which the swindlers exploit. There are many others. A big proportion, chiefly aphrodisiacs, are of a most abominable nature.

In the druggist's bargain basement still more intriguing things are revealed. A particular brand of liniment preparation is sensationally described as embodying "life after death". And the price, in this case, has been reduced to two rupees eight annas (about 3s. 8d.), which is remarkably reasonable for a second lifetime, even in the Indian hot weather!

Moving on to the malaria germ-killing department, I find what is labelled as "the only lasting remedy for fevers of all kinds, either acute or chronic". I must confess that the fine distinction evades me, but let that pass. It is sufficient to know that, for a mere twelve annas (a shilling), one can get something that out-quinines quinine and gives new life to "dying", drooping and helpless patients.

What money and infinite research might have been spared if only Sir Ronald Ross, instead of continuing his life-study of malaria, at enormous personal sacrifice, had looked in on this laboratory when he was last in the East!

There is little space in which to record all the "cures" for human ills, but I feel that I cannot come up from this basement into the light of day without a fleeting reference to a special line in Brain Oil. This is a versatile production, for it not only "cools the brain", but, if you prefer it, you may use it for remedying premature grey hair. Should your hair be dark enough already, then one is solemnly assured that Brain Oil will cure one's nasal catarrh! And all this bewildering range of activities for one rupee four annas (1s. 10d.).

It is for researches into profound matters such as

these, presumably, that Provincial Governments in India are pouring out thousands of rupees as subsidies. Why? I have written enough to indicate that the exploitation of this type of "medicine" appears to be running along pretty sound money-making lines already.

The Principal of a Punjab college once took exception to my statement that a so-called "system" of medicine was "as dead as the dodo". His retort to me was in the following triumphant, not to say naïve, words: "It is not as dead as the dodo; it is as alive as *the cuckoo*!"

CHAPTER X

FATHERING A FAMILY ON FOURPENCE A DAY

FATHERING a family, especially a big one, on fourpence a day sounds like a tough proposition. In India, the land of surprises, it is, however, a commonplace. The acutest poverty stalks the whole country, even including the cities which, externally, appear to be the richest. It huddles in rags outside the millionaires' palaces. It is packed tight in the mazes of rabbit-warrens throughout the bazaars. It is the dominant feature in the scores of thousands of villages which contain most of India's millions.

During recent years, despite comfortable statements in Blue Books regarding the increase of the national wealth per head, the penury of the people has been more grim than ever, for, like all other lands, the Dependency has been affected by the world slump. The depression has been accentuated by acute political unrest. Figures that merely show the growth of a nation's wealth *per head* indicate nothing of real value. If they prove anything, they simply mean that microscopic handfuls of men, who are already enormously rich—such men including the *banias*, or moneylenders, of whom I shall have more to say later—have increased their possessions, chiefly at the expense of the masses.

An income of fourpence a day for an average working man, who almost certainly has a huge family, is quite

normal. It is true that he might, perhaps, earn seven or eight times as much if, like a tiny proportion of his fellows, he became industrialized and took up employment in a workshop or factory.

As the vast majority of the people have no fondness for that sort of life, and are not likely to have any for several generations, it follows that they must remain on the land. There they wring a pitiable existence from scraggy bits of soil, withered and parched in the heat (unless sharing in the blessings of an irrigation scheme) and swamped to a quagmire-like condition in the rains. Their ploughs, drawn by a bullock or a camel, are the rough stone implements that have remained unchanged since the days of Abraham.

It is quite possible that the money received by this type of toiler is as much as sixpence, or even a little more, for a ten to twelve-hour day, but, owing to the restrictions imposed upon him by the weather, especially during the monsoons, it would not be safe to assume that he is able to work more than eight or ten months in every year. Thus, his real all-the-year-round income declines to about fourpence a day.

Nevertheless, on that grotesque wage he is able to achieve the supreme miracle of keeping life and soul together. His clothes, as well as those of his family, are naturally a minimum. Food is of the simplest variety, consisting of a little flour or corn, or other cereals which his clever little wife boils or bakes, doing her best to concoct the most attractive meals from her very limited means. In addition there are spices, such as a chillie or two, and the inevitable salt. It is very rarely that funds will allow the family to indulge in the extra

delicacy of a little of the clarified butter commonly known as *ghi*, or the rancid curd called *dahl*.

His wife, in the intervals between child-bearing, keeps his home as clean as the dust of the summer and the mud of the monsoons will allow. Then, there are sons who help him. His daughters, however, though they love him and he loves them, have greatly added to his struggles.

His family circle is, in fact, a typical illustration of the maxim, heard in so many Indian villages, "even sightless sons help their parents, but the daughters ruin them".

This is because, according to the rigid Hindu practice, husbands *must* be found for girls, since spinsterhood is a disgraceful state. Two of his daughters are already married, the husband, in each case, having been obtained at great sacrifice. One girl is not a wife yet, and, as she is already nine, her father is becoming anxious.

His home, poor as it may be, is better than some. By ingenuity and much toil, he has achieved the dignity of having three rooms under his straw and bamboo roof, whereas so many of the other villagers have merely two. Even so, any visitor would marvel at the skill employed in packing so many human beings within the tiny compass of his mud-walls.

There are a good many naked babies always about the place—his own babies and those of his sons, whose wives, as is so often the case, share the mother-in-law's roof. Every year, there are more little ones. The quiver ever becomes fuller. Birth-control advocates, if they received any hearing at all, would make no impression upon the average Indian villager.

The head of this household is a hard-working man, conscientious according to his lights, and faithful to the tenets of his faith. So far as his personal requirements are concerned, he needs little and possesses less. His immediate anxiety is the future of his youngest daughter. He must get her promised in marriage without delay.

There is a youth in the village who would make an admirable husband, but the price fixed by the lad's father is likely to be rather high. Keen bargaining will probably reduce the tribute, in cash or kind, which must finally be exacted from the girl's parent in consideration of the match being arranged.

How few are the assets which the prospective bride's father can throw into the scale! His entire fortune consists of two goats, acquired through prodigious thrift; the strength of his work-willing arms; and, finally, "one leg in a cow". In mentioning the last-named item, I have used the exact words employed by the man's brother when describing the position to me. What he meant was that a cow was jointly owned by four men of whom his brother was one! (Incidentally, I know of an instance in which a scrap of ground no bigger than a slum backyard in Birmingham is split up among six men whose pride in being landed proprietors is so pronounced that they quarrel violently if any one of them dares to encroach on the possession of another.)

Such, then, are the few poor pieces on the chessboard when the prospective father-in-law, at a conference on the subject, suggests that a goat and fifty rupees should be the lowest valuation for his son.

Then the girl's father, remembering bits of the romances related by the village story-teller, waxes poetic.

"Are not my daughter's eyes made beautiful by kohl ?" he says, lying gallantly, for even the grown women of his household, much less a child of nine, cannot afford kohl.

"One goat and forty-five rupees," comes the response in a tired voice, though there is now a gleam of interest in the speaker's eyes.

"Her eyes are as bright as the evening star," declares the other, pressing his advantage. "Have you not seen and admired her ?"

The older man considers this, trying—though not altogether successfully—to assume a poker-face.

"One goat and forty rupees, and not one anna less," he announces.

"But think, oh, my brother !" pleads the father of the fair one, fired by an eloquence that has already saved ten rupees ; "think ! Her hair is as black as the nights when the storms come. And her lips ! They are red like the sunset and sweet like the lotus ! Truly, she is beautiful, is my little one."

A long pause. Outside, a shrieking mass of children scrabble in a cloud of dust. Down the village street, so narrow that it scarcely has clearance for a bullock-cart, shuffles an untouchable midwife, clad in the vile rags ordained for a confinement. Her face and hands are clusters of festering sores. She is going to a tiny expectant mother, a little girl-wife not yet in her 'teens, a mere child who, in her agony, is officially deemed unclean and, therefore, fit only for contact with outcaste pariahs, who do not hesitate to wrench at their

victims' bodies, and even to brand them with a "holy" fire, should any hitch occur. A scavenger dog, riddled with disease, licks at her ankles as she passes.

Inside the house of the bargaining, the silence is broken.

"Like a lotus are her lips," repeats the father. "She is so lovely—*and so young*!"

Another wait. Then the older man decides. "One goat and thirty-five rupees! That is the lowest, since you are a poor man, but rich in a beautiful daughter. I will bargain no more!"

So the deal is clinched. The dignity of the father's house is saved. The reproach upon his daughter has gone. All that now remains is to attend to the financial details. There is no one in this village who can arrange these except the *bania*, to whom let me now transfer my attention.

This man represents a type which has become one of the greatest institutions of the country; at the same time, he is one of the chief blights upon the land. India is an earthly paradise for these moneylenders, because, when a man borrows, he does not merely promise to repay. If he is poor, as he nearly invariably is, he gives the whole of his possessions in pledge, and, should he die with the load of debt still upon him, which is nearly always the case, the obligation to fulfil the bond, even if the lender has already received the capital several times over, as usually happens, is passed on to the son and frequently to the son's son.

The Brahmans, who comprise such a large proportion of the *banias*, have taken great care that this shall be so, for they have laid it down, as an article of

faith in Hinduism, that the welfare of a father's soul, after death, is largely in the hands of his son. If he leaves debts, they must, therefore, be satisfied, even by the second or third generation. This form of parent-worship is the very life-blood of the Indian usurer. It has created a position which is without parallel elsewhere in the world, for it is no exaggeration to say that, among the rural masses, as well as among the poorer classes in the cities, comprising altogether at least nine-tenths of the population, *the great majority of the people are heavily in debt to the "bania"*.

Most of them have been in that condition throughout their working lives and will remain so until their deaths. As their sons repeat the process, the Brahman usurers will grow fatter and fatter; his silos will be bursting with more and more grain received in lieu of cash; property to an ever increasing extent will be transferred to him in an attempt to satisfy a debt that, somehow, never seems to diminish, thanks to the Oriental ideas of compound interest, "renewals" of advances, and the habit of treating unpaid interest as fresh capital advances carrying still more compound interest.

An example of this class of operation came to my notice in Bengal. There, a village *bania* (in this case a Mahommedan) granted a modest loan of thirty rupees (forty-five shillings) to a Hindu. The transaction was made in 1913, and the arrangement was that interest should be paid at a rate that worked out at more than 93 per cent. per annum. It was stipulated that, if the yearly interest was not paid, compound interest should apply. Naturally, the poor borrower could not keep up his instalments. So the other scale came into force.

Fifteen years later, the man was dragged into court by the moneylender. *The original debt of* £2 5s. *had then become, according to the plaintiff himself,* £8,720 14s.*!*

Probably, the extremes to which usury can go made even this moneylender aghast, for the magnanimous Moslem told the magistrate that he would be content to waive more than £8,600 of the amount and to accept £75 cash in full settlement.

This splendid gesture did not soften the heart of the magistrate towards the usurer. An order was given for payment of £45 in three instalments. Even so, that was twenty times the total of the original loan. Such cases are by no means rare.

There are many instances in which the local *bania*, through his exactions, combined with a willingness to grant "renewals" and his very profitable characteristic of never being in a hurry so long as his clients remain ready to mortgage their future still more, is now the owner of almost entire villages. Further, he is in the happy position of being virtually the overlord of the district. The people, instead of working for themselves, work for him. They are the merest serfs. The produce of their lands goes to him with a deduction of only what may be required to keep the toilers alive.

See him now, as the father of the about-to-be-married daughter visits him. It is night. The usurer is poring over his accounts in the dim light afforded by a miserable wick floating on oil. He is delighted to oblige, for he has had dealings with this man before, and he knows that this further debt can never be discharged in his client's lifetime and that the sons and grandsons will now be automatically dragged into the net.

The village is one of those in which fully ninety-five per cent. of the adult males are already in his debt. It needs only a few more cases like this, and, behold! he will be doing capacity business. Excellent! Is it a matter for wonder that he is delighted?

Genial as he is, and even useful as he is in times of acute financial depression when crops fail (for it must be admitted that he is often the only man to whom the poor can easily turn if crisis overtakes them) he is, much too frequently, a common cheat. He fakes his books. It is a common saying in the Orient that he has one set for the Revenue officials, one for himself, and one for his debtors. And the greatest of these, so far as multiplication is concerned, is the one for his debtors. Subtraction is the feature of the first set, and addition delights his heart when studying the second.

An excellent Mahommedan workman of my acquaintance obtained a loan to pay for the elaborate marriage ceremonial of his daughter, gladly bankrupting himself in the effort. A little later, he told me that it would take him his lifetime (and he was only about forty) to repay the lender, who was a well-known "politically conscious" Hindu. Having every confidence in this workman, and following the example of so many Englishmen in the East, I repaid the loan myself to save the outrageous interest. The man faithfully refunded the money from his wages, clearing the whole amount in six months. But, for every one who can be saved from lifelong ruin in this way, there are hundreds of thousands, and even millions, held in bondage until they die.

It is virtually impossible to estimate the total number

of *banias* in India. They are, as it were, woven closely into the very fabric of the country's life. I do know, however, that, in the Punjab alone, it is estimated, on reliable authority, that they form an army of at least *fifty thousand*!

Nearly all of them are "home-rulers" of the most advanced type, and I have long been convinced that the stranglehold which they exercise over the people is a very important ingredient in the tide of unrest which is sweeping over some sections of the country as I write. When a man has mortgaged the whole of his own life as well as the lives of his family to a money-lender on which "grace" he must depend for every mouthful that he eats, it is obvious that he will be the more ready to dance to whatever tune the piper may call.

So crushed and listless do the masses become under this constant weight of debt that they gradually lose all hope. Even when some unexpected good fortune suddenly lights up their dreary path, they are too apathetic to appreciate their luck.

I find recorded in my diary the case of a sweeper, a very menial worker, in Baluchistan, who won £9,375 in a lottery run by an Indian State. As a sweeper rarely receives more than £10 a year, he found himself, in the twinkling of an eye, possessed of more money than he could earn even if he lived to be 900 years old! What did he do? Did he contemplate buying a fine house wherein he could entertain his guests at meals containing fifty different dishes, as some of the rich Indians do?

Not by any means! He simply announced his intention of buying another *charpoy* (a crude native

string bedstead) from a second-hand dealer in place of the crazy one already in use! On his new possession he intended to lie and dream of his fortune, waking up each day, throughout long years, to find that it was really true!

So saying, he made his purchase. Then he took up his bed and walked, shaking off a swarm of beggars who wanted a little more than his simple requirements. So far as I know, nothing more has been heard of him since he vanished, in this fashion, to an unannounced address. Perhaps, he is still dreaming away the days, too poor to realize that he is rich.

CHAPTER XI

"A MURDER HAS BEEN ARRANGED"

IF criminal circles in India were in the habit of issuing, for private circulation, a sort of "society intelligence" regarding the movements of their members, it would be a fairly common experience to read something like this :

> A murder has been arranged, and will shortly take place at ——. The contracting parties will be Numbers —— and ——, members of the —— crime organization. The victim will be ——.

Fantastic as that might appear to Western people (those of Chicago excepted) it would create very little surprise among sophisticated observers in India. Everyone who has probed beneath the veneer of "enlightenment" in the bigger towns, or studied the lives of the workers at close quarters, must have reason to know that there are more deliberately planned crimes in that country than are committed in any other.

By this, I do not wish to infer that the average Indian has a natural criminal inclination. The truth is, that he has not. He is, instinctively, a peaceable individual except in two respects. First, he cannot resist the magnetic violence of the communal clashes which are all too frequent between Hindus and Mahommedans.

Second, he is partial to bitter feuds against neighbours or former friends.

Discussing this last-named phase of crime recently, a British Judge with long experience of India told me that, in his opinion, the chief causes of premeditated crime in that country were "women and water", in that order. It should be understood that, in an arid land where the diversion of the merest trickle of a stream from some irrigation channel may mean all the difference between growing or not growing a man's life-giving food, words and passions are apt to run high against the offender. He who causes, by his action, another's crops to suffer from lack of moisture, may condemn a family to hunger and possibly to death. The minimum sustenance necessary for maintaining life, wrested from the parched soil, is already so small that the slightest interference might cause disaster.

To steal a man's water, then, is nearly as wicked as to steal his wife.

Prominent in the hierarchy of violence are bands of thieves, who constantly roam the country. Many of these wretches are recruited from people who belong to definitely criminal tribes—that is, they have been reared among sections of the population in which every man, woman and child is either devoted, or is about to be devoted, exclusively to crime. It is fortunate, perhaps, that these communities are, in a sense, localized, that their proclivities are clearly known, and that they are, therefore, more or less controllable.

Thus, we have, for instance, men of the robber-caste, numbering many thousands, whose sphere in life is known to themselves and to everybody else, just as

WHERE KIPLING WORKED. IN A ROOM AT THE FAR RIGHT-HAND SIDE OF THIS COURTYARD OF "THE CIVIL AND MILITARY GAZETTE" OFFICE AT LAHORE, KIPLING WROTE MANY THINGS WHICH HAVE BECOME FAMOUS.

exactly and clearly as if they served an apprenticeship to plumbing and wore the insignia thereof on their sleeves. In these respects, India holds a unique position within the Empire. It is as if the nice people of, say, Tunbridge Wells or Newport News were aware that everybody in Chatham or Brooklyn is a criminal, and that, if an excellent watchman is required, who will be treated with respect by any burglar not wishing to interfere with a fellow-casteman's security of employment, all one has to do is to secure a stout fellow from a criminal community, and give him the post. This is cheaper and more practical than insurance, and it is a comfort to know that in looking either for thieves or thief-catchers, the matter is as simple as going to Sheffield for cutlery.

Robbers are greatly tempted by the unwise practice, so curiously prevalent in a land where larceny casts a very wide net, of hoarding their wealth, both in money and in jewels, instead of using the banks. But this habit, as I have shown, has the advantage of creating honest employment for the robber-watchman, while, at the same time, reducing the toll of successful crime.

Thieves who infest the railway-systems are wonderfully agile and clever. Unless your servant mounts a personal and constant guard over your luggage, it is more than an even chance that, during a long journey, some of your possessions will disappear. The specially-contrived shutters, the double bolts on carriage doors, the ingenious safety catches, all of which are features of the up-to-date railway compartments, are useful enough, but they do not keep the robbers out. Running-

boards are cut away to thwart train-jumping by criminals, but they still manage to enter.

An officer of the Indian Medical Service travelling in one of the Central Indian States left his compartment for two minutes, forgetting that he had no servant with him to remain on watch. Returning, he found that a locked attaché case had been neatly opened and relocked. Nothing had been taken except some two hundred rupees (£15) in notes which had been carefully concealed between the folds of his pyjama suit. The robber had left not the faintest trace of his presence; he must have worked at incredible speed, and the station where this occurred was crowded with people who, one imagines, could have seen him at work, since the time was high noon. What had evidently happened was that several men of the robber caste formed a group near the carriage door, as if wishing a friend good-bye, thus screening the movements of their expert colleague inside the compartment.

The officer was left with no money with which to continue his journey up-country (for this was as far as he had intended to go by train) and he was in a part of India where not a soul knew him. At the time, I was on my way to the Punjab, and it so chanced that we met at this particular spot. Recognizing me, he told me of his loss, and some spare cash in my pocket was exchanged for his hurriedly-scribbled cheque just as my train moved off.

Episodes like this are legion in India. The railways, in which millions of British capital are invested, should stamp out this scourge of robbery. It is bad for the tourist trade, and gives travellers, including Americans

in such a hurry that they base judgement on single experiences, an impression, which is unjustified, that the whole land is a den of thieves. Agitators who demand instant and complete home rule on the ground that the country is fit to govern itself according to the generally accepted standards of civilization might be reminded that, in Britain, we do not expect a tourist, travelling from London to Aberdeen, to take a private staff of sentries with him as a necessary insurance against arriving in Scotland with nothing but his clothes.

Another form of crime favoured by the Indian is cattle-stealing on a huge and ingenious scale. First, he organizes a band which rounds up the animals at night. Then charmingly polite messages are sent to the owners, intimating that their property is in custody and that ransom, or *bhunga*, as it is styled in the North, must be paid as soon as convenient. The agents who conduct these negotiations are shrewd men, courteous but firm. The robbers pay them a generous commission, upon which they depend for a livelihood. So strange is the attitude towards this class of offence that the go-betweens are regarded, by the illiterate villagers, as being engaged in quite a respectable occupation. In a surprising number of cases, the ransom is paid. Cattle-owners often hesitate to inform the police lest reprisals should be launched against them by gangs of highway-men who, one suspects, are linked up with the cattle-thieves' organization.

A man cannot be sure of his safety once he has incurred enmity. He may be betrayed and attacked without a word being spoken. His identity, as he passes down the street, may be revealed to his foes by

a secret roll sounded upon a drum by some innocent-looking person. Or a sham mendicant priest, chanting his prayers near a shrine, may convey all the necessary information merely by altering slightly the intonations and cadences of his voice. In the cities, the police know quite well that a prayer may serve as a warning to someone within earshot, or even as a definite instruction to follow and kill a man. A criminal's mind in the East does not work in Western grooves. It is something infinitely more subtle.

Of all the crimes with which India is cursed, the lifelong private feud, and its frequently terrible outcome, must contain the greatest proportion of premeditation, devilry and horror. It is well-known that many murders have occurred which have been planned months, if not years, ahead. They have been organized with the most scrupulous attention to details. What is still worse, the impression has been widely held, for a long period, that there are some—though, admittedly, very few—Indian members of the legal profession who take an important hand in plotting these affairs, or in giving advice regarding them, it being understood that, in return, their services shall be retained in arranging law-tight alibis or even in conducting the defence should suspicion have pointed too plainly to a client.

Rumours, supported by statements which at least appeared plausible, have reached me to the effect that, in some instances, people connected with the legal underworld have gone so far as to compete with one another in proffering these services. If that is so—and some of the statements were based on very wide

knowledge—a position is reached which is almost tantamount to inviting competitive tenders for the planning and defence of a murder.

After all, if it is generally known in a village that A. has for years hated B., and has publicly sworn to be revenged upon him, no one can be surprised if the accusing finger points to A. when the body of B. is found, early one morning, at the foot of a ravine with his head in contact with a heavy stone and his skull battered in. The only questions to be decided, in such a case, are whether B. stumbled accidentally over the edge, injuring his head fatally, or whether he was first murdered by A. himself, or someone in A.'s employ, who afterwards removed the corpse to the ravine and arranged it in such a way as to convey the impression of an accident. Towards the first theory, the police will probably be sceptical, and A. will, indeed, be lucky if he is not detained on suspicion.

Assume, then, that events reach that stage. What happens next? A. is charged and put on his trial in due course. But he does not worry unduly. He is encompassed about by a cloud of witnesses who establish the most admirable alibi for him. Was he not at some other and distant village when B. was last seen near the ravine on that fatal night? Had not A., to their certain knowledge, expressed the view, during many weeks before the death, that he might have misjudged B. after all, and that he was hoping for an early reconciliation? A clever touch, that! Had not B., on the other hand, stated several times, in the hearing of many of them, that he thought the narrow path near the edge of that ravine, on a dark night when

his *butti* (lantern) did not burn properly, was highly dangerous ? Another shrewd stroke !

Then along comes a little pleader, explaining fussily that he has been very hurriedly briefed for the defence and that he has had but little opportunity of consulting his client. Nevertheless, he makes a telling, if somewhat verbose, speech in which he displays a splendid grasp of the details for one who has received such short notice. In the end, A. is triumphantly acquitted, and the fame of his lawyer as a wonderfully quick and sagacious man to whom to turn in a little trouble of this sort is noised abroad, bringing much future grist to the mill.

Not for a moment do I infer that a practice of this kind is common at the Indian Bar. The vast majority of barristers whom I have known in the East are earnest, honest and hardworking men who, for comparatively poor rewards, due to the extreme poverty of most of their clients, live up to the highest traditions of their profession. But there are black sheep here, as in all other organizations. If some of them stray from the accepted standard, much of the blame should be apportioned to the widespread and subtle nature of Indian crime and the many unnecessary and tempting loopholes in a much over-drafted Penal Code.

In the main, the fashion in murders of the type I have described remains unchanged. Gradually, however, other methods are coming into use, methods which are swifter, more daring and more dangerous, though long premeditation still enters into them.

There was the case of my friend, Saunders, a young Assistant Superintendent of Police, one of the finest

products of an English public school, who was unjustly accused, by a few extremists, of having exceeded his difficult duty at the perilous Lahore demonstration during the arrival of the Simon Commission in that city. The mob swore vengeance on him.

For a time, nothing happened. Many weeks after the disturbances, I spent an evening with him at the bungalow of a mutual acquaintance. Saunders was then glowing with health and seemed to be in the highest spirits. But, underlying his courageous gaiety, there was a hint of tension. He knew, as we all know, that his enemies had him "taped". Still he remained at his post with a smile.

Another month passed. And then, in broad daylight, without a moment's warning, he was shot down *from behind* by a murder-gang as he was motor-cycling on duty. As he lay on the ground, dying, other assassins ran up and poured more bullets into him. The slayers escaped, and, though many arrests were made later, there are killers who still have to swing for that most foul and clearly pre-arranged murder.

Meanwhile, the authorities are, no doubt, making inquiries into the many stories in circulation regarding the alleged carefully-organized relations between secret criminal plotters and some of the young girls and child-widows who are dedicated to the service of Hindu temples as prostitutes. I have often been told by people whose standing cannot be questioned that, during recent years, many conspiracies have been hatched, particularly in Bengal, by extremists in collusion both with those unfortunates and the less circumscribed denizens of the bazaar brothels, one of whose

missions in life appears to be to collect as much useful information as possible from unwitting patrons.

Another recent vogue is the sending of letters to public men plainly stating that, on or before a certain date, they will be "removed" by a "soldier" of the "Indian Republican Army". The "soldier's" number is nearly always given. If the prospective victim is considered to be of sufficient importance, he may earn the distinction of learning that two or more "soldiers" have been earmarked for the task. There must be few British Editors in India who have not received missives of this kind. The last which came into my hands was posted at Rawalpindi and was beautifully typed on high quality paper which seemed to indicate that the sender's artistic ideas had greatly outstripped his moral sense.

CHAPTER XII

THE GREAT LAWYER IN THE LAND OF PETTY PLEADERS

INDIA is suffering badly to-day from a positive plague of lawyers and petty pleaders most of whom are out of work. People who complain that the legal profession is overcrowded in England should visit our Eastern Empire for a few months and see the law-courts in some of the larger towns. Then they would realize the desperate nature of the professional competition between the swarms of thin, narrow-chested, worried-looking and spectacled members of the Bar. The ever-stronger lure of this calling is one of the greater mysteries of the Orient.

An official with long experience of the country sought to explain it by telling me: "It is because the Indian is instinctively an argumentative and 'squabbly' person, with a love for fine distinctions and for splitting hairs about nothing." I believe my friend hit the nail squarely on the head. Indians of *all* classes love a really keen dispute. That is one reason why the country is so extraordinarily difficult to administer. There is, however, a compensating advantage inasmuch as the passion for pomp and ceremony and verbosity that draws the Indian to the law-courts when he wants to settle a quarrel is a better thing for the public weal, as well as for the lawyer's pocket, than the alternative method,

much quicker but more dangerous, of the poison-cup or dagger. That consideration alone should cause Britons to look not too unkindly upon the flocks of little pleaders who all hope to be judges when the British finally withdraw and when, arising from the consequent chaos, there will be more quarrels than ever—quarrels over which lawyers can argue for months, at so much a day, before leaving them more unsettled than before.

The vast enclosure around an Indian law-court, in the busy season, has a striking resemblance to a densely-packed fairground just before the roundabouts are erected. Everybody seems festive. Families, complete with platoons of children, camp out in readiness for a merry day, or series of days, while the elder members are inside the great building "having the law on" some long-detested neighbour, even if, as is likely, they must plunge into debt for ever when the legal costs are presented.

The crowd grows as more and more cases are called on. There is an electric atmosphere. Shouts and peals of squeaky laughter split the air. The children erect wigwam contrivances and romp deliriously. Their seniors gabble incessantly, as only Indians can. Cutting across their drab lives, in this way, a lawsuit means a day of days. It is a gala occasion. A domestic feud may be crowned with victory for them, and with delightful disgrace for the other side. Someone whom they do not like is being shown up ! Their own lawyer, who was born in their village, will be sure to do that well when the time comes for them to troop into court. That time may be to-morrow, or the next day, or the

day after that. What matters it ? Will not the *dénouement* be amply worth the long wait ? Is not almost the entire village present to witness the triumph, or possibly the tragedy, according to which way the judgement goes ? Have they not saved up for years for this moment ? Have they not made a long journey by train to get to this court ? Did they not arrive at the station nearest their village a full 48 hours before the train left, camping out on the platform the while, lighting their fires, cooking their food and performing their ablutions there, in full view of all passengers, as is the approved Indian way when any great object is to be achieved ? What is time in the East ? Only something that leads up to supreme moments like this !

So intense and widespread is the interest taken in lawsuits of this kind that a railway official once told me that his company had contemplated running specially cheap excursions in connection with the more popular type of cases, so that people might be still more encouraged to travel with a view to witnessing these legal comedy-dramas !

I estimate that, throughout India, more than ten million people resort to the law-courts every year as principals in various suits. Probably, a similar number of witnesses are involved. The time and money wasted upon this low quarrelsome instinct would be sufficient to give the masses the bodily health which they so badly need.

There are other reactions arising from these "squabbly" and pseudo-legal attributes of the Indian mind. Some of them are rather amusing, or annoying. For example, I received a letter from a petty pleader

in a remote and "jungly" district putting forward this extraordinary request: He begged to be informed of the "charge" which would be made for publishing twice a month, spread over a full year, "the legitimate political grievances" (his own words) of a certain class of Indian Government officials. For this service, he offered cash in advance. As a crowning stroke, he added: "Please also say what will be your extra charge for comments and editorial notes, to be made once every two months."

His curious idea was that all one had to do to get "legitimate political grievances" aired in the news columns of a responsible and not unimportant British journal was to pay for their publication at advertisement rates, while, according to his notions, a little extra money would also ensure editorial support. In other words, he believed that newspaper views could be bought much as one might purchase soap. What made matters worse was that he wrote to me in his *professional* capacity. I am afraid that the reply I dictated to this abominable insult was much more pointed than polite.

I wonder what Sir John Simon, one of the really great leaders and pleaders at the Bar, would have thought if he had come into close personal contact with the poor creatures of this type? During his memorable tour, a portion of which I was privileged to witness, he met a host of Indian barristers, men of admittedly outstanding ability, but, for every one of that standard, there are scores who possess strange ideas regarding equity and bribery. It is a truly dramatic fact that this eminent lawyer should have found his severest critics (as was the case) among the obscure legal small-fry

with which India teems. In the Punjab alone there are between 1,000 and 1,500 pleaders, about five times as many as there were twenty years ago, and the pettiest brains among them were those which were most hostile to the Statutory Commission.

Since his tour, Sir John Simon's name has been in everybody's mouth. All Britain has been gripped by the wonderfully lucid, impartial and detached survey of India presented by the Commission which he headed.

But so quiet and unassuming is the man, so wrapped up is he in the work in hand, that I doubt whether one person in a thousand, reading summaries of the document known already to fame as the Simon Report, realize that Sir John undertook what is far away the biggest and most intricate job in the world.

This scholarly-looking barrister, at the age of 57, has tackled a task upon which will depend the future of no fewer than 319 million souls, as well as the prospect of work and wages for vast numbers of Britons whose employment of hand or brain in the home-country supplies the needs of that immense overseas population.

The once-popular illusion that India is a land of mystery and "niggers"—a land too far off to worry about in the winning of our daily bread—is swiftly passing. That is due to the pressure of hard, economic facts.

India becomes "difficult" to handle—and the looms of Lancashire slow down. India develops unrest—and our great industries receive fewer orders for the heavy goods we once exported. India toys dangerously with an anti-British boycott and our trade-balance drops by millions, although our Eastern dependency remains easily our best customer.

The average Briton may have only the sketchiest notion of "swaraj" and Ghandi, and the inner meaning of Hindu-Moslem friction. It is not the province of this book to discuss those questions. None the less, the reaction of the Indian tangle comes right home to Englishmen and to their wives and children. For India is the keystone of our Empire, and a mainstay of our trade. Of all to-day's questions, it is certainly the most vital and personal.

As a world-Power, Britain would vanish over the precipice if she lost India. But how best shall we keep it, and how shall we set about solving its perplexities? Solve them we must, for—to put the matter on no higher a plane—peace and progress there mean bread and butter at home.

It might be thought that to grapple with such a tremendous and responsible issue would be beyond the power of a human brain. Consider its immensity. The Report and the accompanying documents which complete the printed record tip the scale at almost a hundredweight! Surely, the world's biggest job!

This colossal effort has involved two-and-a-half years of incessant labour—since January, 1928—by seven able men, among whom Sir John Simon has been the outstanding personality.

This should not be taken as in any way disparaging the remaining six Commissioners, all shrewd observers and careful investigators.

The point is that Sir John would stand out dominantly in any company. Next to him, I should place Lord Burnham, who was personally popular everywhere in India, even among the extreme critics.

IN GLORIOUS SIMLA. LORD IRWIN, THE VICEROY, INSPECTING TROOPS AT A CEREMONIAL PARADE ON SIMLA RIDGE.

From a host of memories regarding my contact with the work of the Commission, I select an impression which I contributed recently to *The Sunday Sun*. The scene is a palatial court-room in Karachi, the great and ever-growing port of Sind. The date is November, 1928, and the temperature (for this is "the cool weather") is merciful and pleasant at about a mere ninety degrees in the shade.

Sir John and his fellow Commissioners, wearing smartly-tailored tropical suits of silk with the soft collars necessarily beloved by Europeans in the East, are seated beneath deeply-recessed windows screened in such a way that the sun's rays cannot enter directly.

The Commission is in session. On either side of "the seven" forming a wide semi-circle, are seated groups of representative Indians who had decided to co-operate in the inquiry. Let me try to tell you what these men look like.

They include Hindu leaders from Bombay—sharp-faced, wiry lawyers with characteristically high-pitched voices; splendidly-bearded and burly Mahommedan land-owners; magnificent Sikhs of war-like appearance, whose powerful chest-development contrasts strangely with the physique of the Hindus; beautifully turbaned experts on finance, education and a dozen subjects; rather sad-looking spokesmen for "the depressed classes", a euphemism that covers sixty million people whom Hinduism condemns to a life worse than that of starved pariah dogs; alert and vigorous Punjabis; dreamy but somewhat cleverer Bengalis; and a number of other men of varying creeds, castes and mother-tongues (though they all speak English here) who bring some

particular viewpoint from the medley of a melting-pot that goes by the name of India.

Sir John, the personification of kindness, a serene smile often flitting across his smooth features, surveys the mixed assembly. Witnesses are called. They present a mass of highly technical figures and facts with the droning sing-song intonation so marked among Eastern peoples.

Electric fans whir overhead. Through the open windows drift the taps of an Indian drum, the strains of music, or the sharp yelp of a scavenger dog. Dust settles thickly everywhere, for rain is rare in Karachi. Meanwhile, witnesses drone on.

Sir John listens intently, sometimes with his head resting against the ornate chair, sometimes leaning forward with his chin cupped in his palm. He takes no notes ; he consults no documents.

And then, suddenly, he becomes the great barrister, the redoubtable leader of the English Bar, who has mastered the facts of the case. In the most courteous way imaginable, he checks a short-sighted witness who is on the point of taking a fresh nose-dive into a perfect welter of statistics and blandly remarks to him :

"Wait a moment, please, Mr. So-and-So. All that information is already available." And he goes on to mention the Government document in which it appears, quotes the exact heading and page, points out that the data is amplified in yet another ponderous official return, and tells the flabbergasted witness precisely where that can be found as well ! All this without taking a note !

As the inquiry proceeds, such instances are common.

The chairman's stupendous memory and grasp of detail never fail him. I had long known of Sir John Simon as an eminent barrister, reputed to be earning a vast income, but it was not until I went to India and saw him at work with the Commission that I realized he is worth every penny of it.

Do not imagine that the inquiry was concerned entirely with dry-as-dust details and figures. It had many lighter moments. For instance, in another town, there was a wonderful old Mahommedan warrior, with flashing eye and terrific chest, who was asked by someone what would be the attitude of his community towards a local government containing a Hindu majority.

Fingering imaginary pistols, clutching a visionary sword, and glaring in the direction of the Hindus in the room, he thundered his reply: "Our attitude would be perfectly proper—toward those who were left!"

Islam is truly a virile faith.

Then, again, I remember a "zemindar" (landowning notable) coming before the Commission in raiment so gorgeous that it would have dazzled even Mr. C. B. Cochran. Medals, ribbons, headwear, coat, breeches, spurs, everything—they were a blaze of beautifully-blended colour. And the man himself, a genial Moslem giant, carried them off splendidly.

It so happened that, as this gorgeous Hercules swam, like a new star, into our ken, Sir John and his colleagues were studying some photographic pictures which had been handed in as exhibits by a witness.

Instantly, one of the Commissioners—I think it was Lord Burnham, well-known for his genial wit—turned to the radiant notable and said: "Sir, we were

looking at pictures, but it is much nicer to look at you." This remark was made with such sincere admiration and courtesy that the glittering giant beamed with delight.

If there were humours, there were also dangers. It should not be forgotten that Sir John Simon's mighty task had real physical perils. He says nothing of them in the dispassionate summing-up which the world has now read. But they were there. I saw many of them.

Rowdy, ignorant and inflamed mobs, sometimes of huge proportions, engaged at a penny per head, gathered as near as they could get to various railway stations during the tour, only to find that nothing could ruffle Sir John's calm smile and charming courtesy. These attributes proved so disarming that at Karachi, for instance, crowds that had collected with the object of yelling "Go back, Simon!" (the only three words they knew) ended by singing and cheering instead!

But things were not so happy at Lahore, where there was a clash between the police and a mob numbering tens of thousands. Even so, the most collected man within sight of that screeching multitude was Sir John Simon, serenely discussing affairs with his hosts. Had the police failed at that moment, anything might have happened.

Then think of the endless studying and hard thinking which had to be done by the Commission when it was not in session.

Even amid the pleasures and lavish hospitalities of the East, duties and worries obtruded themselves. It was work, work, work all the way. One example out of hundreds will illustrate the point.

Sir John and his colleagues were entertained at the residence of an Indian nobleman whose guest I also happened to be. Arrangements were made on a truly Arabian Nights' scale. We were gathered at night on our host's lawn in a "shamianah", or huge marquee. Its sides were rolled up, in places, giving glimpses of a radiant tropical moon in a star-dusted sky. At all points where the marquee-sides reached down to the ground, lovely tapestries had been hung.

Gleaming statuary and blazing clusters of flowers concealed every supporting pole. We trod on carpets from Persia and sat on silken cushions from Kashmir.

Rubies from Burmah, gems from Ceylon, jewels from all the Orient flashed around us. Gold and silver table appointments glittered among the rare exotic foods set against a background of real damask. Brass-ware from Benares, placed cunningly in odd corners, vied in its sheen and beauty with the gold itself. Magic-makers from Mysore were there to mystify us (which they certainly did), and a score or more of richly-turbaned servants moved barefooted hither and thither to supply the needs of the fifty guests.

Yet amid all this colour and glow and beauty, there arrived a messenger, hot-foot, to remind the Commissioner's chairman that an important Indian deputation would like to see him, two hours hence, at a place some miles away. I believe that he saw these gentlemen about three, and not two hours later, for he did not disappoint his host by shortening his visit.

Such, then, are but a few glimpses of the India which Sir John surveyed. The recommendations based upon his extraordinarily difficult task are already known.

Whatever the outcome, the British public, and even Indians themselves, will agree that to Sir John Simon, the quiet English barrister who declined the Woolsack at the age of 49, must be given the credit of having achieved something greater than the Lord Chancellorship. For he has carried out, with typical efficiency, the biggest job in the world.

CHAPTER XIII

"UNCLEAN! . . . UNCLEAN!"

THE agony of India's sixty million "untouchables" —a mass of people comprising nearly one-and-a-half times the population of Britain—is the most shameful drama in the history of the world. I make that statement without any qualification. Although this tragedy has occupied the stage of human affairs for countless years, it is still being enacted. Its background is an entire sub-continent; its scenes are crowded with a concourse that represents nearly one man, woman and child in every five throughout our vast Eastern domains.

All the participants in the drama are fellow human beings whose lives are as miserable as those of the lowest mongrel curs. By order of one dominant section of society, the Hindu Brahmans, they are completely shut out from all the amenities that make existence worth while. So foul are they deemed to be that even their shadows bring pollution. Thus it is that, if a man of the "untouchable" caste should chance to pass a high-caste Indian so closely that his shadow falls across the other's food, the member of the loftier division of Hinduism must at once throw away his unconsumed meal and go through all the elaborate rites of purification.

To the poor "untouchable" is assigned all the

filthiest tasks that the mind of man can conceive ; and, in a hot and insanitary country, such duties are legion. In many areas, he may not draw water from the same well as more fortunate creatures. His sufferings in a land where thirst is an incessant torture are thereby deliberately intensified. He is even forbidden to join in worship at the temples, for the shrines are not for such dogs as he. It is, perhaps, a sign of the awakening conscience of India that, in some areas, this ban is being relaxed, though the reform, where it has been introduced, is applied so slowly and grudgingly as to be almost imperceptible.

All the other fetters remain, and they chafe the more terribly as the light of Western ideas gradually permeates the minds of even these poor illiterates. The despairing souls have dared to appoint their own spokesmen. Deputations have been sent, and still are being sent, to influential people craving help in lifting these millions from the hopeless depths to which their fellow men have sent them. Mostly, such efforts, however eloquent the speakers—and I have encountered some who make magnificent use of their opportunities —meet with nothing but fair words. Delegates are assured that their auditors fully appreciate and sympathize with the laudable desire for advancement. The interests of these poor Hindus are ever near their hearts, and so on.

There, as a rule, the matter ends. Nothing of a really far-reaching nature is ever done. A solitary concession may be reluctantly given, applying to just a few people in one particular place. Rarely is there any genuinely humane feeling behind such an act.

More probably it is dictated by purely political motives, the so-called reformers having an eye to possibly useful votes on some future occasion when representatives of "the depressed classes", to quote the euphemism for the pariahs, may be asked to remember what the high and mighty ones have done, or promised to do, for the lowly wretches.

The damning fact remains that a man, if he is born an outcaste, must remain so all his life. He might achieve fortune, though that is most unlikely, and he might exchange his string bed and mud floor for the silk-cushioned divan and marble halls of a Rajput. He might buy fleets of cars and stables of racing horses ; but he will, until his days' end, still be an "untouchable"; for, whatever else he might alter, his caste is unchangeable. That is the rigid law, and I do not think that any soul on earth will live to see it set aside. To remedy this injustice would be to cut away one of the deepest and strongest roots of Hinduism. It is laid down in the revered writings and it is stipulated in the code of Manu, the law-maker, in spirit, if not in so many words, that the "untouchable" cannot be admitted among general society, that contact with him is to be abhorred, as a defilement, and that he is allowed to breathe the same air as other Hindus merely on sufferance.

"Really, these people ought to be glad that they are on this earth at all," a twice-born Brahman seriously told me when I protested to him against these things. "In the ordinary way, their forefathers would all have been killed off at the time when the caste system was first organized. It was only the charitable and magnanimous spirit of our great law-givers which saved

them. They are not really of our blood; they are of a different, lower and contemptible race. Yet, when other nations would have slaughtered them, we admitted them into Hinduism—on conditions. We have stuck to our bargain, and we have kept the peace. Attack it as you will, the arrangement has, on the whole, been in the interests of the general welfare."

The man who used those words is of excellent breeding and is a University graduate. And the conversation took place, not in the days of Marco Polo, but only two years ago. It did not apply to serfdom in ancient China but to a mass of dumb and suffering people, sufficient to pack London and New York nine or ten times over—people who live under the British flag in the twentieth century.

Such is the defence set up for the most abominable inhumanities. The very foundations of the Brahman religion seek to justify the scandal. The idea of *karma* (the reaping of rewards in future incarnations, for the life lived in previous states, until the Ultimate Perfection is reached) gives the "untouchable" not even a sporting chance of happiness. If he were allowed to improve his condition on earth, it is argued, he might attain Perfection immediately on leaving this stage of life. That eventuality is reserved for the Brahman who, so it is contended, has a better claim, having been longer on the waiting-list and having passed more qualifying tests.

Shut out as he is from the pleasures of earth and the prospects of heaven, the pariah can yet be a very human, patient and kindly creature. I have met many of his type, and I gladly pay a tribute to him.

When my favourite dog was callously run down by a fat, leering Bengali in a speeding car, and lay maimed and dying in a crowded Indian street, the only man out of the whole mob who ran to a hydrant and brought water cupped in his so-called unclean hands, so that the animal might cool his tortured tongue, was an "untouchable". Twice-born Brahmans passed by contemptuously, for dogs are "unclean" to them, even when the faithful little souls are dying in the dust.

In Central India, when a woman, lured by a ruse to the lonely house of a Hindu notable, was shrieking in his grip, the brute having first loosed a restive horse in the paved courtyard so that the clatter of hoofs might drown the cries, it was an "untouchable" who rushed to the rescue when other Hindus, of higher caste, dare not approach, for fear of the rich man's wrath.

During the worst tropical tempest that had struck India for many years, when houses were being swept away like scraps of paper in an English March; when flood and fire were adding to the people's terror; when even the most massive roofs were wrenched asunder in the howling wind, and the torrents were loosed upon us; when power and light and telephones all failed, it was an "untouchable" who went out into the inferno to rescue a cowering mongrel that he loved, while lordly caste-men, more prone to panic, sought only their own shelter. It was one of these "menials", too, who swarmed up to a ceiling just outside my door and plucked down, with his bare hands, a big and dangerous blazing fan when others merely cried "look!"

These are three incidents of which I happen to have

personal knowledge. Thousands of similar cases could be cited, for, among such a stupendous total as sixty millions, who shall dare to say that all are beyond the pale? These so-called pariahs include hundreds of thousands of decent men, kind fathers, good husbands, and brave and faithful friends.

Yet even to-day it is on record that, in some parts of India, there is a rule that *an outcaste must not eat food in the morning until he has drunk water* (*bipracharanamrita*) *in which an unctuous Brahman, not more than a few minutes previously, has delicately and obligingly dipped his great toe*!

Pollution-tables—or the distances which an "untouchable," in all circumstances, must keep between himself and a high-caste man, such as a Brahman—are observed, even to this day, particularly in Southern India and Bengal.

Thus, an outcaste in the Madras Presidency who commits the enormity of eating beef is deemed to pollute others at a range of *sixty-four feet*! Certain types of agricultural workers are more fortunate, inasmuch as contamination, in their case, is conveyed when they are only forty-eight feet away. A seller of toddy is luckier still, at thirty-six feet, while leather-workers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and men of a few other occupations escape lightly with a limit of a mere twenty-four feet. Highest of all in this sad scale are the "ordinary untouchables" who, so it is decreed, can pollute only by direct physical contact.

Oh, how the sixty-four-feet man envies the "ordinary" who can, at any rate, go into the bazaars and obtain his food, if he has any money (a rare state), so long as he touches no one! He is a veritable prince

to the long-distance wretch, who must for ever shun the paths of other men and slink away to some deserted burrow like a pestiferous animal when the hunt is up.

These things endure to-day in the heart of the Empire, in a land administered by Britons. They will continue indefinitely—for the sons of these unfortunate humans *must* take the caste of their fathers—unless Britons have the courage to say that the barbarities shall cease. The heartless wretches who, for the sake of priestcraft and for their own glorification, maintain these iniquities deserve the thunderbolts of a national wrath. The saddest drama in the world has lasted long enough. Only the conscience of Britain and the world can ring down the curtain upon it—self-seeking stage-managers and all—and bring relief to *sixty million* human souls in torment.

CHAPTER XIV

"AND YET . . . AND YET!"

I LOVE India. I love her charm, her serenity, her poise. I can never forget the glory and peace of her sunsets; the courtesy and kindness of her people (with the few exceptions which are not of real importance in so populous a land); the magnetism she exercises over the mind; her patient and philosophic outlook; her indefinable sense of an ancient culture with deep-down values struggling to break through its degradations; her breath-catching monuments and buildings, unrivalled in the world; her genuine desire for peace and progress; and her keen appreciation of even the simplest forms of human happiness.

Some of the phases of life with which previous chapters have dealt must not be confused with the ordinary, everyday existence of the masses. Nearly all the evils mentioned in this book are not the products of the people *as a people*. Rather, they are the results of religious systems, adequate, sensible enough and workable at the time when they were evolved, but, since then, debased and exploited for the special benefit of two or three classes who seek to establish a complete domination throughout this immense sub-continent. The *real* people of India, as distinct from the self-seeking politicians (the merest handful) and the priesthood (much stronger and more numerous), are

always brave and often beautiful souls. Their long-suffering, if its tale were ever fully told, would fire the hearts and inspire the minds of the whole world.

Engaged in the terribly responsible and arduous work of administering this huge country are some of the finest men—both Indians and Britons—whom one could wish to meet. The full story of their heroic work, too, will never be told. You will find them in the wild and "jungly" places—where the white man's prestige is, perhaps, highest and where they are cut off from all pleasures and recreations except those which they can improvise for themselves. These are the self-reliant, steady, and conscientious men who know India a thousand times better than the Parliamentary noise-makers. They are to-day's "wise men of the East". All that they need is the opportunity to use, and to extend, their knowledge without constant interference from distant politicians whose chief interest is to gain an advantage—fleeting, perhaps—for some petty caucus.

There are, to mention just one section of India's real friends, those splendid toilers, the members of the Indian Medical Service, and the fully-qualified Indian doctors. It should not be assumed from anything I have written in my exposure of the quacks and charlatans that the fine men who perform really skilled work are in the slightest degree neglectful of the responsibilities laid upon them. Anyone who knows India is aware that the contrary is the case. I have been acquainted with many officers of the I.M.S. To see them performing their duties, nearly always under great difficulties, and not infrequently amid deliberately discouraging

circumstances that would break the hearts of lesser men, must always earn the deepest admiration.

This Service is surely among the noblest in all Asia, and those who have joined it form a magnificent body of men. There are English doctors in obscure parts of India who are much nearer to the people than London's most fashionable physicians. If they were paid in proportion to the amount of healing they perform, they would have enough money to let their names overrun every brass plate in Harley Street. Instead, they are engaged in work that is none too well paid; they toil in a dangerous climate; they are frequently in stations which are cut off from nearly all the pleasures of social life; are in a Service which, year by year, consistently fails to attract an adequate number of recruits, with the result that the older they get, the more onerous are the tasks they must undertake. Finally, when their own health is shattered, they have prospects of nothing beyond retirement on a pension just small enough to let them die in a little suburban house in England, for all the world as though they had spent their lives checking balances in a Pimlico bank rather than fighting death in an Asiatic fever swamp.

These men do what they can for the poverty-stricken Indians. They take as much trouble with the lowliest outcaste as with the most stately landowner. No question of "untouchability" or pollution ever enters their heads. At wonderful institutions like the vast Mayo Hospital, in Lahore, where I once spent nearly a whole day, you will find them performing the most intricate and delicate operations upon even the

humblest sweeper, while the outcaste's entire family—his brothers, his wife, his numerous children, and his father-in-law—camp out in a corner of one of the huge wards as near as they can get to the operating theatre. There these watchers cook their food and prepare their own shake-downs, for all the world like gipsies, hoping the while for the news that the patient has been restored to health by the magic of the white man.

Gradually—but oh, so gradually—the Indians, even the "untouchables", are learning to turn for succour to the skilled healers of their bodies rather than to the noisy and overrated politicians who bring nothing but a ferment to their minds. Given sufficient Government support, the efficient doctor could soon exercise a greater, and certainly more useful, power than even Mr. Gandhi.

And what of Mr. Gandhi? Not very long ago he was a potent force. But I do not think he counts so greatly to-day. The interest formerly taken in his actions and words by millions of people almost evaporated when he virtually rejected a request that, in any new Indian Constitution, there should be a definite improvement in the conditions of the "untouchables", whose shameful miseries I have outlined in the previous chapter. His reply was, in effect, that these men would not achieve equality. I firmly believe that, from that self-revealing moment, Mr. Gandhi, the *Mahatma* (or, "the magnanimous saintly one"), ceased to be a world-force in the eyes of ordinary men.

He is a Brahman whose forbears were in the *banya*, the trading and moneylending, group.

The laws of his caste are inexorable. It is decreed

that its members cannot freely mix and associate with the more lowly.

What sort of man is he? Let me quote a little pen-picture of him which I wrote a few months ago. Regarded by many as a Saint, he is a mystical educated-in-England leader, a preacher of non-violence, whose followers have committed more crimes of violence than I have had time to count. He was a recruiting agent for the British armies during the War. He is an apostle of home-spinning, and yet the enemy of all things mechanical. Thus he has helped to throw half of Lancashire out of work.

Yet, it is strange how this hater of mechanism considers his dollar American watch to be almost as indispensable as his *khaddar*, or native-spun loin cloth, apart from which he is naked.

I can imagine him, as he was before his last committal to prison, squatting, cross-legged, on a tiny platform, a little wizened figure, shaven-headed save for one straggling wisp of hair, with piercing eyes behind owl-like horn-rimmed spectacles, protruding ears, hooked nose, mournfully turned-down moustache, toothless gums, and high-pitched squeaky voice.

Now and again he will pull out his beloved watch and consult it, for his days are crowded with punctual religious ceremonials, and are but slaves obeying the loud mechanical tick of that mass-produced (though certainly non-British) article. Gilbert certainly conceived no greater irony.

At the other end of the scale, so far as worldly surroundings are concerned, is the Viceroy, representing the power and prestige of the King-Emperor, and,

what is more, the earnest good wishes of the British people towards the Indian masses.

"Christian things done in a Christian way will never alienate the people." These words of Lord Lawrence largely provide the key to Lord Irwin's Viceregal policy. Whatever his critics may say, there was almost general agreement in India, during the time I lived there, that his outstanding achievement is the way in which he has won the respect of both the chief rival communities, the Hindus and the Mahommedans.

I have no patience with cynics who are for ever talking nastily about the luxury and splendour of a Viceroy's life. There is, of course, a certain amount of pomp surrounding Lord Irwin's position. Those who understand the mind of Oriental people will agree that this impressiveness is more or less essential. I do not suppose that his Excellency really cares a rap about the ornamental trappings of his post. On the contrary, I have an idea that he would much prefer country life in Yorkshire. But duty has decreed otherwise for him, and duty can often be a stern affair.

When I had the honour of being received by Lord Irwin on a flaming summer day at Simla, he was besieged with work. There had been callers all the morning—many of them concerned with matters of State—and there were callers throughout the afternoon. Some of the day-to-day problems presenting themselves to him for solution would turn the average man's hair grey within twelve months. In spite of this, Lord Irwin always faces the most trying enigmas with a charitable and kindly spirit.

What pen can adequately describe the beauty of

the Viceroy's summer capital among the Himalayas? It is a thrill to make that wonderful journey from Kalka, among the foothills of the world's mightiest mountain-range, up to the Fairyland City set upon a peak about eight thousand feet high. The road skirts precipices, and crosses ravines, in a way which makes a journey over any Alpine Corniche a mere humdrum affair by comparison. At places there would be sheer drops of a thousand feet or more if one went off the road, and the journey by car is perhaps the finest test of the nerves which one could ever encounter.

Incidentally, Simla itself is so hilly that, in the interest of safety, only three persons are allowed to run a car there. They are the Viceroy, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army in India, and the Governor of the Punjab.

The visitor to Viceregal Lodge—a stately building set amid a panorama of beauty which almost takes the breath away—usually arrives in a rickshaw drawn by four or five coolies. There is a striking absence of fuss. Indian soldiers smartly salute the caller as he passes the guard-room, and *chaprassis*, or personal servants, in gorgeous uniforms are lined up outside the main entrance to the Lodge in readiness to usher the visitor within.

Inside, one is welcomed by an aide-de-camp and other members of the Viceroy's staff. A short wait; a bell rings; and, within a few moments, one is conducted up a superb staircase to Lord Irwin's private room, outside which a majestic, black-bearded Indian soldier stands on guard.

This sentry, a man in the prime of life, is of earnest,

magnificent mien, and splendid physique. Whether or not he is armed to the teeth, I cannot say, but I feel sure that there is no insurance company in Asia or Europe which would care to underwrite the risk attending any unauthorized person who tried to pass him.

By contrast, how homely is the atmosphere on the other side of that door! It is like a bit of old England! Just a large, pleasant room, with a few good pictures, a comfortable but not too massive carpet, a spacious desk, and a number of well-worn easy chairs. No pomp here. It is a man's room.

Conversing with his Excellency, the average visitor must feel at ease in a very few minutes. The tall, erect figure, the bronze, clean-shaven face, the kindly eyes, and the warm-hearted smile all create an atmosphere of understanding and good-will.

I must not write, in detail, of the various matters of which we spoke, though I would like to place on record, as my outstanding impression, that Lord Irwin is deeply anxious to see the general condition of the Indian people improved, particularly in regard to health and education.

We smoked—not Corona Coronas, as Congress Party orators might imagine, but cigarettes. I hope I am committing no indiscretion when I reveal that the Viceroy's came out of a tin of the most democratic kind—a yellow tin that sells by the million in England and India.

There was a dog in the room—a nice, elderly elkhound, a great favourite. During the whole of our conversation this pleasant and friendly creature sat with his head on my knees, but he kept loving eyes upon

his master. The Viceroy and animal adored one another. That was obvious. And that is a fact which to all dog-lovers—and, therefore, to nearly all British people —must be as eloquent as many pages of writing.

Though it has the best of intentions, I often wonder whether Simla—by which I mean, not the Viceroy, but the average official—is really in the closest possible touch with the teeming India that stretches away to the south below the giant mountains. I cannot say. Simla is such a perplexing place. I know something of its gaiety; but I also know that this is not the India of the millions at all. Rather, it is a great Ritz-Carlton in a lovely and variegated stage-setting with just enough of the Orient to give it a piquant flavouring.

A last impression. . . . I was driving away, after a sitting of the Simon Commission, with a very powerful and rich Mahommedan landowner. The weather had been excessively dry and hot. Rain was badly needed. The crops of his many tenants were in peril. Hundreds of men whom he loved like a father (for he was the best type of landlord) were in danger of starvation—unless rain came.

We had not gone for more than a mile along a wretched and dusty road when a drop of moisture splashed down on my face. I drew his attention to it. He glanced up from the steering wheel of his saloon car, and, even as he did so, a great deluge came down.

My first instinct was to close the windows. But my friend's ideas were quite different. He stopped the car, opened the door, and, with a polite "excuse me for a moment," he descended.

"AND YET! . . . AND YET!"

Down on his knees he went—down in the filth of the roadway which was now a foam of mud. He pressed his forehead to that slimy, oozing soil. And he offered up a prayer of thankfulness for the rain that had come to help his brothers. Through the open door I caught some of his words:

"Oh, God! . . . The Generous! . . . The Bountiful!"

THE END

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